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COVER: A warrior and his high-flying companion confront a sorcerer in Doug Beekman's painting, "Wizard's First Rule." ABOVE: Hercules, along with his partner Xena, are among television's returning fantasy programs. See story beginning page 28.

REALMS OF FANTASY

Fiction.

36 THE ONE ACT

By A.M. Dellamonica

We all have magic in us, whether we know it or not, whether we live it or not. What's important is how it manifests.

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Sometimes, for Christmas, we get not only what we want, but what we need.

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By Beverly Suarez-Beard

How can a maiden be true if she is false? How can a curse be wicked if it is just?

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At long last, Anne McCaffrey tells the story of Robinton—beloved MasterHarper of Pern.



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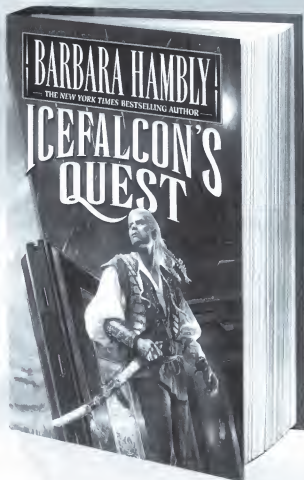


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REALMS OF FANTASY

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Editorial

More Voices

LAST EDITORIAL I SPOKE ABOUT THREE possible literary voices used in writing fantasy and applied them to a story opening called "The Barbarian Takes Tea with the Queen." Not surprisingly, each of the pieces were completely different, though the two main characters and their teacups remained recognizable. Sort of.

Here are three more voices telling that same story.

The *Boogerman Voice*, the voice of dark fantasy, is full of feints followed by frontal assaults. It jabs, lulling you with details — like what you ate for dinner and what wine, full-bodied and slightly amusing, you drank with it. And then when you are full and ripe, Boogerman pops you one right in the mouth, your teeth spray out, the pulsating, greasy tentacles go down your throat, the barbs catching on your heart, and slowly ... slowly they pull your heart out ...

The thing about being a writer is that you get to pick the details and those details move the reader at the pace you dictate toward your inevitable but surprising slime. Art is at its base just a matter of selection.

And how would Boogerman write about the Barbarian and his teacup date with the queen?

The Barbarian, waist a solid 44, pecs nicely sculpted by recent days at the Uptown Gym, this week's special at \$25 if you sign up the full year, wrapped his hamfist around the dimity cup of tea carefully because the cup was frigging hot. He could smell the mint leaves and something else maybe a touch of taintam? As long as there was nothing else, added. Nothing, you know, illegal. Like some guys always wanted you to try. He couldn't afford to be ruled off. Not with the house payment coming due. And wanting to buy Jolie a real ring for putting up with him so many years.

But this Queen dame, who was fronting money for his training, was — Chappy said — an angel come from nowhere. Connecticut maybe, wanting to be part of the action, and he had to see her for tea. She said a drink but Chappy said not during his training, though he longed for a single malt, something from Scotland where his mother, God rest her, had come from and even 80 years later had a brogue that could flay the skin off your cheeks.

This Queen character wanted to know what she was buying for her cash, touch the bod a bit, he guessed, the dames who came to watch him always wanted that. Jolie wouldn't mind; she was used to it, as long as it wasn't anything serious. He smiled, glad he'd put in the new bridge so the spaces between his teeth didn't show. Turned his head slightly to look at her out of the corner of his eye, Jolie liked that, said it was cute which, given he weighed in at 288, was something he supposed.

And the Queen smiled back, only her teeth were odd, pointed like, even filed if he didn't know better. And he didn't, or wouldn't know because she

loaned into him, over him, those teeth, into his throat and razoring down to his belly, slitting him open, the hot intestines falling out like so many sausages, her eyes glittering, and he never laid a hand. Jolie, he swore. Or a hold. Nothing serious at all, so who was the barbarian now?

Let's turn now to the *Fool's Voice*, high and piercing, full of ridiculous trills and anachronisms, word plays, aphorisms, puns.

Of course all humor is chaos captured. The shaking together of what should be disconnected matrices. We laugh in order not to cry.

Since he had come from East Jersey, the Barbarian had been forced to be tea-total, and never more so than when he had drinks with the Queen. She, poor mad thing, was once again AA-ed and — he knew — that meant T. Really, things were better before alphabet soup had been invented. He remembered fondly his illiterate days on the steppes and the fermented Yak Dung. That was why he liked Lapsong Suchong, it had the same slightly snokey, yukky taste.

"Drink up, Queenie," he said to her, lifting the cup.

She raised her flower-sprigged cup back at him. It suited her to a T.

The final voice I want to offer is the voice of the magical realist, what I call *London Loli* or *Piccadilly Puck* or, perhaps, *Midtown Mab*.

When fairy tales were first invented there was more mystery in the Dark Woods than in any village. What Magical Realism has done is move the denizens of faeries into the city. In that harsher neon light we are all forced to see with altered eyes. What was once familiar — fairies and boggles and nuggles and sprites — becomes unfamiliar when dressed in modern clothes. Yet the chaotic nature of the Fey remains the same.

Midtown Mab's voice therefore has to combine old and new; bardic sensibilities with modern punk/grunge vocabulary. Chants become rap. Magic in metal is different in shape but not, perhaps, in kind. The language is at once lush and sharp, eldritch and hip.

Grax sat uneasily on the synthe-hide stool waiting for the queen. He drank tea because, after a night of bar-hopping, from the Wet End to the White Horse, his stomach was tied up, knotted as neatly as a sailor's rope. Running his fingers over the tensed muscles, he groaned. He could hear the tea gurgling inside, complaining like the Dee in full flood.

His face had a green tinge. The queen would notice such things. Mean and green, she'd probably say, and hit him with her fan. If he was lucky she wouldn't sing.

He took another sip from the chipped white cup. By-the-Powers-Tell. He could have used something stronger. Blackberry maybe. He whispered to himself: Blackberry, Bayberry, Thistle and Thorn, You'll rue the day, That you were born.

Continued on page 84

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

The leading letter in the August 1997 issue distressed me greatly. T.L. Favors should receive encouragement from a university professor, and not the not-so-subtle, racist and sexist remarks that she received. A more literal translation of the meaning of that professor's words is that she should not attempt to write something she likes because she is both Black and female. That type of thinking is wrong: plain, pure, and simply wrong. No one should ever be discouraged from an avocation, or even a hobby, simply because of gender or race. Assuming the best of intentions, on both the parts of the professor and her fellow student, they both should go back and rethink their positions on what any individual can or cannot do. If Ms. Favors can turn out fiction in a field she obviously cares a great deal about, and that fiction is done well enough that an editor wishes to buy it, then those are the only standards that should apply. For the record, I am a 44-year-old white male from eastern North Carolina, in the midst of obtaining a BS in Political Science at East Carolina University.

Sincerely yours,
Wm. Leroy Nichols
Washington, NC

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

I challenge T.L. Favors (Letters, ROF, August 1997) to write her project on Black authors of fantasy and you to publish it as an essay / editorial in ROF. Ms. Favors, your letter is difficult to answer because it has two trains of thought, each with dark overtones. You want to write an article on Black fantasy authors, but you find few authors. More significantly, you interpret criticism as discouragement. The most telling sentence of your letter is, "Naturally I haven't listened to any of this."

Remember that you are not at the university just to expound your own ideas. You are there to trade ideas and learn new ones. This means you listen to criticism and take it in stride. It means you learn different modes of expression. Fantasy involves as much research and hard work as any other genre. Write fantasy because it is the right thing for you.

Also, have you considered how often stories with fantastic elements are published outside the usual fantasy market? Consider *The Farnished Road* by Ben Okri. This novel could easily have been published as fantasy. Okri drew upon his deep and rich cultural heritage to tell his story. He used a fantastic element, the *Akibu*. If you want American

authors, consider Zora Neale Hurston. An anthropologist, she drew upon the Creole legends of the South. Several of her stories also involve an element of fantasy.

You also may want to ask yourself: are some traditional themes of fantasy peculiarly North European? For example, Arthurian legends, and the Celtic and Scandinavian myths that dominate that genre.

In any case, choose your theme carefully. Handle it as you see best and I'll be looking forward to your essay on the Black authors (or lack thereof) within the fantasy genre.

Sincerely yours,
Bob Bradford
Richfield, MN

Dear *Realms of Fantasy*:

I am a beginning writer interested in having a writing career. A successful writing career, that is. Please fill me in on the requirements for publication in your magazine. Format, content, word length, etc. What do you immediately toss away and to what do you give a second look? How much postage is required? Do your requirements parallel those of other similar publications? Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions for those of us at the novice stage.

Yours Truly,
Andrew Smith
Jasper, AL

I guess this stuff bears repeating! First of all, each and every publication has its own set of guidelines. Send a SASE to the appropriate address and eventually the guidelines will make their way back to you. At ROF the mechanics of a manuscript are very important. Double-spacing is a must. SASE enclosed with full and proper postage if you expect a reply. We are not especially interested in the state of your marriage, the color of your current vehicle, or that you eat spaghetti every Wednesday night. I would have to say the most prevalent reason a story is discarded is because the writing is just plain BAD. We are not going to read through a poorly written tale in the hopes it will come together in the end. Nor are we in the business to provide a writer with editorial services. Send us your work in tip-top shape. If you would like advice or suggestions on your writing, a colleague, teacher, or writer's group, might be able to provide you with this. Another essential requirement is that you must be familiar with the publication you are submitting work to. Pulling our name out of a hat and hoping your work matches up just doesn't work. We've said it before, we'll say it again. Don't quit your day job.

And write for the love of writing; it will be apparent in your work, and that is when your piece just might garner that second look.

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

Of the vast multitude of magazines I subscribe to, yours is one of my favorites. The June 1997 issue pleased me to no end. Two stories in particular grabbed me. Martha Wells' *Bad Medicine* was a captivating adventure filled with the mysterious magics I love in fantasy stories. Mr. Pollack's accompanying art is now hanging on my wall. And *The Horse From The Sea* by Kirsten Corby had its own sense of mysticism, the revelation of two people's gods actually being one and the same is an idea I personally adhere to. It touched me on a personal level, which is a goal of every writer. Please pass on my praise to Ms. Wells and Ms. Corby, and encourage them to send you more stories! I also enjoyed the excerpt from R.A. Salvatore's new novel. Perhaps you would consider doing that sort of thing on a more regular basis? Regardless, ROF is an enjoyable experience. Keep up the good work, and I'll be a subscriber for life!

Sincerely,
Paul M. Hagon
Wauwatosa, WI

Thanks for your kind words. I think I'll be posting this letter on my wall!

Dear Shawna:

I eagerly read ROF from cover to cover. I am especially attracted to tales involving vampire lore. What gets my bat, pardon the bad pun, is because of the media, vampires are given a bad name. Why don't you publish more vampire stories/artwork? My all-time favorite cover of yours was the vampire on your October 1996 issue.

Thanks,
Joe Perkins
Pitkin, LA

Well Joe, I personally felt Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise (with a little help from Anne Rice of course) gave vampires a rather good name. Which is why, I think, we became inundated with vampire tales at about that same time, none too original. We are happy to publish a unique vampire tale on occasion, but it needs to be truly good stuff to catch our eye, something we can really sink our teeth into! Ouch.

Send your letters to: Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760. Or better yet, E-mail: s.mccarthy@genie.geis.com

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THIS TIME WE HAVE THE PRIVILEGE TO PRESENT SOME FINE BOLD BOOKS OF FANTASIA Americana, all wrapped gaudily in red, white, and blue bunting, bravely escorted by enthusiastic brass bands accompanied by cheering crowds of mixed rubes and city slickers, the whole sunshine display brightened sharply by contrast with the darkness of our amazingly awful wars and the endlessly inventive cruelties we've devised to clear the poor and the helpless from our steeply upward path to ever greater glory.

Forgive my chauvinism, but I sometimes do find myself wondering why American authors of the fantastic so often concern themselves exclusively with German elves or British gnomes or French fairies when they have such a gorgeous array of wonders crowding underfoot.

Why do they toddle off to dream in Devon when the fields of Gettysburg rest so near? Why do they stalk the far-away parapets of Rhinish castles whilst in their homeland the palaces of Bar Harbor and Southern California emit such stimulating, sweetly sinister beckonings?

Of course, I *know* why they do it as I've done that sort of thing myself many a time and often, happy to say, but fresh from reading such entertaining stuff as what we have here to consider, I am eager to plead for more attention to and use of the American sources we so ungratefully ignore and daily push aside.

Harry Turtledove is a fine example of what I'm asking of his fellow toilers in the realms of fantasy. He knows better than to limit himself to the Deare Olde Worlde. There's no doubt, mind, that he knows it well — he's proven that conclusively with his *Videssos Cycle* — but observe carefully how saucily he mixes it with our New World and an alien world to boot in the *The Worldwar*

Saga; note how firmly and cleverly he forces us to look at the often-avoided basic motivation for our great Civil War in *The Guns of the South*.

His bold new book, *How Few Remain*, (Ballantine Books, NY; 474 pgs., hardcover, \$25.00), clearly the start of another trilogy, examines the complex and pivotal period that followed the Civil War and in large part shaped not only the course of our own country's history but profoundly affected the direction taken by every other nation in the world.

He commences his alternate history by having the South win the Civil War (by the way do not be misled; this world has no connection with *The Guns of the South* save that it takes off from our "real" world).

Now many books and stories have done that and I read a quantity of them and fumed each time for their not employing what I have always thought would be the jolliest Worlds Of If chop and redirect for having it happen. Imagine my thrill and growing delight as I realized that at *last* someone — and Turtledove, himself, no less — was going to use it! I am going to spin the story here because it is covered in the first few pages of the book so

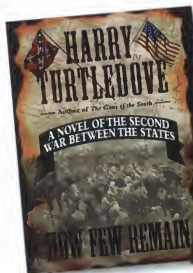
the telling will in no way spoil the impact of the novel; and because I can't resist doing it.

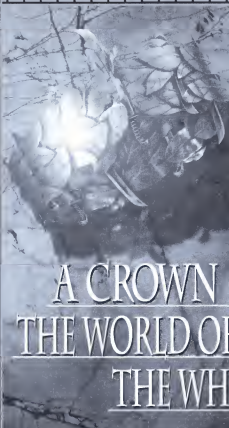
The "real" story is delightfully implausible; in September of 1862 General Lee needed to tell every division in the Army of Northern Virginia where he wanted it to go and what he wanted it to do. He boiled all that down into what came to be called Special Order 191. Clever subordinates (far too clever, as it happened) camouflaged these vital documents by converting them into the wrappings around three cigars. These cigars were lost in transit outside Frederick, Maryland and later found by Yankees who — most unlikely event of them all!!! — did not smoke, but unwrapped and read them. Thus, dear readers, did the Battle of Antietam come to be fought, and by a very well-prepared Union Army.

Is that a swell story, or what?

In *How Few Remain* a smart ass corporal informs the courier he has dropped the cigars, the Battle of Antietam never takes place, Lincoln chickens out on issuing his Emancipation Proclamation in the face of his constituent's lessening enthusiasm before Lee's highly successful onslaught, the powers of Europe see the

Harry Turtledove's latest and Ward Moore's classic both deliver delightful alternate histories of the American Civil War.





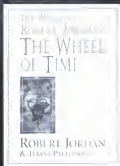
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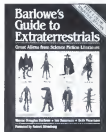
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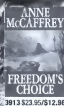
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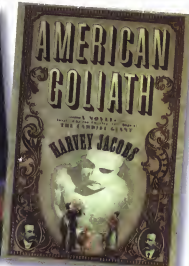
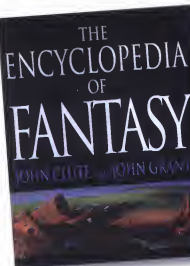
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advantages of recognizing and supporting the South's cause, and the war ends in a Korean-style standoff with the Confederate States of America victorious in their struggle for independence and the United States of America vastly diminished.

Because of the USA's defeat and the war's early termination, a whole lot of lives and causes take totally different turnings and, as in his other works, Turtledove not only ensures that each variation from our "real" world is logical in each changed event and in the marvelously complicated relationships between them and all the other changed events, he is careful to select them so that they will maximize as much as possible the potential of the alternative world outlook's ability to cleverly illuminate and subtly educate the reader.

If your experience with this book runs along the lines of mine, I think you will find, for instance, that your understanding of Abraham Lincoln will be greatly enhanced. Here we have the chance to see a completely convincing portrayal of this truly great man as the disgraced leader of a badly generated war who may have lost his cause but neither his fire nor his power of oratory. In the face



of derision and occasional great risk he wanders the country doing his best to confound exploiters and help the people help themselves. It is enormously revealing to see what might have happened to Lincoln's politics and the philosophy underlying them in the

face of the cataclysmic failure of all his brave hopes, and to see what new actions he might have taken and what new strategies might have been developed, to forward them.

Turtledove does not stop at these larger considerations, he is far too good an entertainer for that; he also plays with the smaller, not so hugely looming events that might take place in this different world. Sometimes these are shocking, sometimes amusing, sometimes a little of both. A good example of this latter category is the account of a marvelous moment when Lincoln is politely interrupted during dinner at a hotel restaurant by a seedy-looking man whom he recognizes only after the poor fellow stumbingly identifies himself as Ulysses S. Grant. They exchange a word or two and then the man, whose war ended too soon for him to become anything more than a walk-on, departs after offering kindly accepted apologies to Mr. Lincoln for intruding on his meal.

The cast of characters is rich and wonderful and brilliantly selected to put the brightest light on what this World Of If has to say to our World Of Is. George "Autie" Armstrong Custer is very prominently featured as is Geronimo and Sam Clemens (who did not become Mark Twain), and Jeb Stuart and Stonewall Jackson (who was not killed in the Civil War), and Frederick Douglass (those of us interested in Douglass, as all of us certainly should be, will enjoy his prominent role in this book), and you'll be happy to learn that Theodore Roosevelt has no trouble at all finding plenty of thrills to fill the gap left by the absence of the charge up San Juan Hill!

The action of the book is sweeping and exciting and opens up many wonderful cans of worms that I am sure will be most interestingly developed in the two books I expect will come. The Mormons encounter considerably more difficulty in this other world and react fiercely to it; there is an account of a battle for Louisville launched from across the Ohio, which will I guarantee will take your

Continued on page 17

BOOKS TO WATCH FOR

The Still, by David Feintuch, *Aspect Trade Paperback \$12.99*. Ex-attorney Feintuch's novel involves a young heir that must first become a man before he can become a king. Prince Rodrigo, heir to the throne of Caledon, is prematurely thrust into a world of treachery and power with the death of his mother, Queen Elena. A wicked uncle takes control of the Still, magic belonging to the rulers of Caledon. Roddy's coming of age is a journey of self-discovery, betrayal and true alliance with Caledon's nobility. A classic tale of the king who must earn his kingdom.

Thoughts of God, by Michael Kamaly, *ACE Trade Paperback \$12.00*. A metaphysical novel of murder. A philosophical novel of suspense that sees the future and recounts the otherworldly struggles of life and death. Two hunters, One a killer of innocents, the other a vigilante who's quest to bring this killer to justice. The tale brings you to the very notebooks of God where questions may or may not be answered and earthly justice may or may not prevail.

Gothic Ghosts, edited by Wendy Webb and Charles Grant, *Too Books Hardcover \$22.95*. An anthology of supernatural stories including works by such writers as Nancy Holder, Ester M. Freisner, and Brian Stableford. A new vein of gothic fiction with an undercurrent of love loss and found. Works that will arouse terror and inspire the most jaded reader of

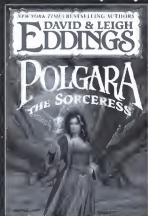
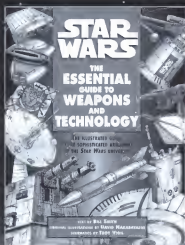
ghost stories to read on with trepidation and delight.

Blood of the Fold, by Terry Goodkind, *Too Paperback \$6.99*. Book Three of The Sword of Truth. A rousing tale of magic and adventure. The new world has been breached by the powers of the old world. Richard and Kahlan are the only ones with a hope of saving the world from an armageddon of unparalleled destruction. Traditional fantasy at its best.

Winter Tides, by James P. Blaylock, *ACE Hardcover \$21.95*. Blaylock's protagonist, David Quinn, is a half-hero who once attempted to save identical twin sisters, and was able to save just one. Haunted by this fifteen-year-old episode and drawn by fate into a relationship with the surviving sister, Anne, he must battle her jealous twin ghost Elinor as well. A mystical and off-beat tale of evil, love, and forgiveness.

War of the Waters, by Douglas Niles, *ACE Paperback \$14.00*. Book Three of the Waterseed Trilogy. Good vs. evil in a fantasy realm of man and magic. Humans and Faeries strive to battle the darklord and his countless minions. The Man and Woman of Three Waters must follow their destiny. A journey that will take them through the bleakest of wastelands to the sword that will strike hard at the very heart of the evil. The explosive conclusion to a brilliant trilogy by one of the authors of Dragonlance.

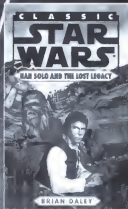
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mind entirely off the real world as it is a true wower; there is a somewhat smaller attack on Tombstone, Arizona, OK Corral and all, and wait til you read what those damn Brits do to San Francisco!

I think those attempting currently to turn around the dismal status of public education should make it their business to have an extensive in-depth seminar with Harry Turtledove.

Just so long as it doesn't interfere with his turning out these nifty books.

Here's some more dandy education from the same period of time in American history, only this one takes place in what is laughingly called the real world (when will they learn?).

Also, speaking of alternatives, pedants might make the gaff of describing this book as nonfantasy since it does concern an event that, astoundingly and hilariously, actually did take place, but in so doing they would only be exposing themselves for a bunch of silly twits since this is a tale of reality actually entering — nay, diving into — the realm of fantasy.

And, just to soothe the nervous who may be among us, there are two running commentaries throughout the book spoken by rocks in the process of being turned into the fossils of a prehuman race.

Now and then, in discussing with certain enthusiastic readers of the fantastic, it suddenly dawns on me that they feel the stuff is confined to a genre, that they believe it to be somehow safely bottled up in books and movies and the collected folk accounts of what old gaffers said ages ago by long-died-out firesides.

Of course it isn't any way entrapped. It's loose.

We must remember, however, to be gentle with and thoughtful of those truly innocent enough to think there wasn't and isn't a West because there are Westerns; speak kindly and softly to those naive enough to believe for one moment that Mystery is confined to mysteries.

If the fantastic only happened in fantasies, the story of *American Goliath*, (St. Martin's Press, NY; 346 pgs. hardcover, \$23.95) could never have taken place.

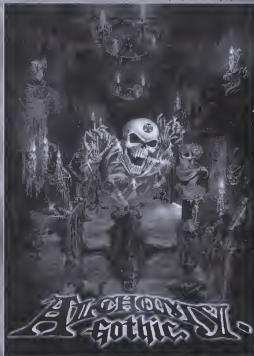
Harvey Jacobs is its author and he is and has been for donkeys' years an excellent craftsman of the bizarre and a fine observer of human foibles. He understands the sort of stuff I've been muttering about very well, likely much better than I do, and like a kindly old Zen master he has been good enough to incorporate some of his gentle wisdom concerning mankind's consistently faulty grip on reality into a highly instructive and vastly entertaining novel.

The doings in it are kicked off by the imaginative greed of George Hull, member of an industrious and ambitious family of cigar manufacturers and dealers doing business in Binghamton, New York. The first of George's wily maneuvers is his persuading one

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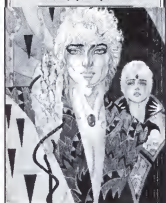
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Hamish Flonk (the names in this book have not been changed to protect the innocent, much less the guilty) to play soldier in his stead during the Civil War for a mere three hundred gold dollars and the promise he would take Hamish's wife, Angelica, as his bride and give her a child should Flonk perish in the fray.

Flonk manages to die in spite of being a plodding, conservative sort (the qualities upon which George had been counting to see Flonk through) and our hero finds himself married to and endlessly trying to impregnate the skimpy Angelica, a small, delicate creature who crosses rooms with such wispy gentleness she never stirs the air.

The second silly scheme George comes up with is the notion of developing a cigar designed to appeal to the newly freed Blacks who must surely be a market of vast potential. He calls it the Pickaninny until a Black Pullman porter very carefully points out it might be best to rebaptize it as, say, the Uncle Tom. The Blacks confound his plan by developing a passionate and near-exclusive loyalty for a whole new method of packaging tobacco just then invented: the cigarette.

What new clever scheme to try?

The question is answered to George's full satisfaction when his attempts to peddle Uncle Toms take him within hearing distance of the Rev. Henry Turk, a dotty minister who has done enormous damage in his attempts to educate young Native Americans (Jacobs is extremely unkind throughout his book concerning the White Man's dealings with Native Americans), and hears him deliver a sermon stirringly putting forth the interesting notion that when the Book of Genesis stated: "There were Giants in the Earth in those days," it was referring to our very own American Earth and none other.

From there it's a direct launch into a hilarious account of one of the best and most outrageous scams ever played on the citizens of the United States of America. Its victims even include one of the greatest and most magnificent dilders this nation has ever produced, and who I am hugely proud to actually be related to, namely P.T. Barnum himself!

Jacobs gives what is one of the finest presentations of dear old P.T. I have ever read, and you can bet your bottom dollar I am highly picky when it comes to delineations of my beloved distant uncle. He is presented in the flesh and enjoying the flesh. Perhaps, just maybe, just possibly, Jacobs errs a tiny bit in giving Barnum as clear a view as he does of his hypocrisies — I suspect the old gentleman really did have totally sanctimonious moments — but this is more than compensated for by showing him relishing his rogueries full blooded and the Yankee toughness with which he managed to survive some of the toughest career blows a showman ever had to triumph over. I am very grateful for the way he brings the dear old fellow to life, and Gen. Tom Thumb, too! Way far the best presentation the doughty lit-

tle fellow's been given yet, starting with him cartwheeling through the Gettysburg National Cemetery and never letting up.

These spectacular headlines are backed up with a colorful cast of hard-bitten reporters, Hell's Kitchen thugs, prize fighters, elephants, whores, robber barons, water witches, many crazed artisans of varied description, a cast of thousands of suckers plus two — count 'em — two — astounding petrified giants.

And it all actually happened.

Wrapping up this bonanza of the post-Civil War fantastic, allow me to call your attention to a handsome reissue of Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee*, (Ballantine Books), NY; 222 pgs., softcover, \$11.00).

Although it by no means started the alternate-universe notion, I think it is safe to say that *Jubilee* did push it to the level of sophistication it now enjoys and by large set up new goal posts for all following practitioners.

I read it a million years ago when it first came out — or perhaps a shorter version of it — in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, still being edited then, if memory serves, by Boucher and McComas. It totally blew me away along with all the other creepy kids who read that lovely publication; put me into a permanent awed daze; reprogrammed my software.

If you haven't read the story of Hodgins McCormick Backmaker and his profound toyings with history you really ought to give yourself a treat and do so as quickly as possible.

It probably won't be as much of a total whack on the head as it was to me since you have read books written in the World Of If which was created when Moore wrote *Jubilee*, but I bet you love it just the same.

The Encyclopedia of Fantasy, John Clute and John Grant; St. Martin's Press, NY; 1049 pgs., hardcover, \$75.00 — Yessir, that's right — \$75.00. But if you are in any way involved in the business of fantasy, or a serious collector, or a dedicated student, you really won't want to be without it.

There've been some excellent prior encyclopedias but this enormous reference work will without doubt henceforth form the data cornerstone in the library of anyone truly interested in this sort of stuff. It has an astounding amount of information and is so scrupulously and richly cross-indexed that you can find yourself endlessly and delightfully lured by insidious arrows pointing at subjects from your original intention of just looking up one specific author, artist, book, movie, magazine, role playing game, opera, poem, technical, or literary notion into endless fascinating byways and come out of your exploratory daze hours later to discover that you've spend a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon reading instead of writing or drawing funny pictures in order to make a little money to pay the rent and buy milk for the children — so be warned.

Personally, I find that idly flipping through

Continued on page 85

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TO THOSE OF US BROUGHT UP ON MODERN FAIRY IMAGES (DIMINUTIVE SPRITES WITH BUTTERFLY WINGS AND TWINKLING, WIDE-EYED DISNEY CARTOONS), the 1978 publication of *Faeries* by two masterful British illustrators (Alan Lee and Brian Froud) came as a revelation. Here, in all their beautiful, horrible glory were the faeries of old British legends, undiluted by greeting card sentiment: gorgeous and grotesque (often at the same time), creatures of ivy, oak and stone — born out of the British landscape, as potent, wild and unpredictable as a force of nature. I was a student back in '78, slowly moving from standard literature studies to the more specialized realm of mythology. At that time and place, such studies revolved around national mythological epics (the Irish *Tain*, the Welsh *Mabinogion*, the Finnish *Kalavala*, etc.), and the hierarchies of the classical gods. Faeries whetted my deep appetite for tales more humble yet just as enchanting: those old fairy tales and old wives' tales passed on from generation to generation over spinning wheels and cooking fires ... and still recounted by country folk and storytellers today. *Faeries*, with its splendid illustrations (skillfully rendered, distinctly unchildlike, and

filled with a sexy, sly humor), confirmed my own impressions gained from transcriptions of old oral accounts: that faeries are capricious, dangerous beings, beautiful and terrible all at once — a far cry from the insipidly dainty fairies of my childhood books.

Twenty years later, my student (let alone my childhood) days long in the past, I am sitting in my English home amid a faery infestation. One expects a ghost or a spirit or two in a four-hundred-year-old cottage like this one—but this summer there are faeries everywhere: on every table and every shelf, on the walls, on my desk,

spread across the floor, leering, cavorting, beguiling, enchanting ... catching my gaze as I cross the room, snagging my thoughts and imagination with elongated fingers and fathomless eyes, with luminous color, dazzling detail and rich archetypal symbolism. My cottage, you see, is filled with the stunning new faery art of Brian Froud — images he has painted and drawn in the two decades since *Faeries* appeared. This art is, finally, to be made available to the world at large (from Simon & Schuster, next spring), in a lavish edition bursting with new faery paintings. It has been my happy task this summer to edit the text that will go with the art: meditations on the nature of faery, and on the pictures themselves.

"In the years after *Faeries* came out," Brian says, "I worked on many other projects. I designed two movies for Jim Henson: *The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth*; I published several other books, such as *Lady Cottington's Pressed Fairy Book* and *The Goblin Companion*. Yet of all these things, *Faeries* seems to have captured the imagination of the greatest number of readers. When I venture out of my studio to work on projects half way across the world, people still seek me out clutching old, well-worn copies of *Faeries*."

In the 20 years since publication, Brian has never stopped his own personal exploration of the faery realm. During those years he met his wife Wendy (an accomplished sculptor and doll-maker) on the set of *The Dark Crystal*; their son was born; and they moved to Stinshall, a 17th-century Devon "longhouse." Faery paintings and drawings then began to crowd Brian out of his

Brian Froud's *Nicnivin* is the Elph Queene of the Unseelie Court. She rules over the dark side of Faerieland in old Scottish lore.



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studio, spilling into the rest of the house alongside Wendy's mythic sculptures, woodland masks and fairy dolls. As this body of fairy imagery grew, he also followed the faeries' footsteps through the study of world mythology, archetypal psychology and magical esoterica. Now the result of this lengthy exploration has culminated in a fascinating new book presenting one artist's unique vision of the magical world around him, deeply rooted in nature and myth. "Faeries," he explains, "was a book about the past, concentrating on the folklore of these British Isles. The new book, *Good Faeries/Bad Faeries*, links past, present and future together — looking at fairy lore from all around the world, still alive to this day."

When I took on the job of working with Brian's text, I foolishly thought I knew a thing or two about fairy lore myself. But faeries are sly and tricky creatures; they delight in exposing foolishness, in turning assumptions upside-down. Seeing the faeries through Brian's eyes, and winding my way through dusty old tomes of world folklore, marchen, and myth, I've discovered a fairy realm more vast and vibrant than I'd ever imagined. Faeries, from earliest memory, come with a bewildering variety of names, shapes, sizes, customs, habitats and local histories — from the tiny Portunes (among the earliest of faeries recorded in English manuscripts) to the tall, lordly and icily beautiful Sidhe of Ireland; from the gentle nature spirits who fecundate and regulate growing green life to the fierce daemons, djinns, alns, nats and boggies who revel in causing great harm.

For a trustworthiness map to guide one through the shifting shadows of faerieland, I start any journey in that direction with the books of the late Katherine Briggs close at hand — for her extraordinary work in the field of British faeries has never been rivalled. Drawing upon the writings of the great fairy scholars of the past (see book recommendations at the end of this article) as well as upon her own research, Briggs examines mankind's persistent belief in a hidden race of semi-visible, nonhuman creatures "of a middle nature between humans and the angels." This belief can be found under varying names in local traditions all over the world, but perhaps nowhere quite as vigorously and as variously as here in Great Britain. "The strange thing," Briggs muses, "is that strange, tenuous and fragile as [the fairy tradition] is, the tradition is still there, and lingers on from generation to generation substantially unchanged. Every now and then poets and writers draw on the tradition, and make something out of it suitable to the spirit of their age. Sometimes this passes back into the tradition, and perhaps alters it a little."

"Mankind always recognized the existence



ABOVE: Like many of Brian Froud's faeries, this gentle creature is wistful, charming and humorous ... yet he stands on the darker aspect of magic of Faerieland. RIGHT: Faeries (says Froud) are made up of energy, emotion and luminous pulses of light.

of nonhuman beings," says Brian Froud — an artist who adds something unique from our modern age to old fairy traditions. "We've always recognized good spirits and bad spirits with an influence on daily life. In ancient Greece, Porphyry — a neo-Platonist of the third century — explained that the air was inhabited by both good and bad spirits which had no solid body or fixed shape, changing form at will. The bad spirits were composed of turbulent malignity, their influence antagonistic. They created disruptions whenever humans neglected to properly acknowledge them — and thus could be appeased by attention, prayer and certain rites. The Romans also acknowledged the presence of fairy spirits, called the Lares. Along with the Manes (spirits of the dead) and the Penates (guardian spirits), the Lares — when properly venerated at the hearth (the heart) of the household — protected the home and family. Lares Compitales guarded crossroads; Lares Vitales helped in safe journeys. All Lares were ruled over by their mother, Larunda, an Earth goddess/fairy queen. The Roman Bogeymen were the Lemures, spirits of the night. They had all the traits of bad faeries — of our modern boggies or hobgoblins — and had to be placated by throwing black beans at them while turning the head away. In Norse mythology, the maggots emerging from the dead body of the giant Ymir transmuted into both Light and Dark Elves (or Alfjar): the Light (called the



Liosalfar) inhabiting the air, the Dark (called the Dockalfar) dwelling in the earth."

In Persia, the Peri were faerie creatures formed of the element of fire, existing on a diet of perfume and other exquisite odors. The Devs were the bad faeries of Persian myth — forever at war with the Peri, whom they captured and locked away in iron cages hanging high in the trees. The Laminak of Basque folklore, the Yumboes of West Africa, the Grama-Devata of India, the Jinn of Arabia, the Hsien of China, the "underhill people" of the Cherokee are all fairy creatures divided into those that are basically benevolent toward humankind, and those of whom we'd best beware, intent on doing us harm. Certain fairy traditions sharpen the divisions between wicked and benevolent faeries — such as the Seelie and Unseelie Courts to be found in Scottish folklore, the latter ruled over the Nicnivin, the fearsome, dark Elph Queene. The Dark Queen in old Spanish myths rules over the Estantiqua, a host of spirits that rule over the hours of dusk and dark. In Germany, Frau Berchta leads her ghostly dogs in the murderous Wild Hunt — chasing unlucky mortals to their death, as well as gentler breeds of faeries. Despite this division of dark and light creatures found in some corners of faerieland, Froud believes every fairy contains the potential for both good and harm — a belief backed up by a certain Dr. Jackson of the 17th century: "Thus are the fayries from difference of events ascribed to them, divided into Good and Bad, when it is by one and the same malignant fiend that meddled in both, seeking sometimes to be feared, otherwiles to be loved."

Katherine Briggs uses the following division in categorizing basic fairy types: Solitary Faeries and Trooping Faeries, both of which can be fearsome or beneficent by whim or design. Solitary Faeries are generally those associated with a certain location: a river, fountain, grove of trees, stretch of moorland, or household. About the Trooping Faeries,

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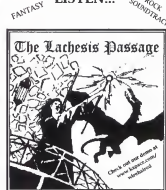
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Briggs writes: "In nearly all countries where fairy beliefs are to be found at least some of the fairy people are supposed to be gregarious, riding in procession, hunting, holding court and feasting, and above all dancing. This is perhaps particularly true of the British Isles, though in France, Italy, Scandinavia and Germany there are the same tales of dancing, revelry and processions.... They may be evil, dealing death or sickness to every man and creature they pass on their way, like the Sluagh of the Highlands; they may steal unchurched wives from child-bed, or snatch away unchristened babes leaving animated stocks or sickly children of their own in their place, or they may be harmless and even beneficial — fertility spirits watching over the growth of flowers or bringing good luck to herds or children."

One method of studying faeries is to categorize these slippery creatures by place: faeries of the forest and field, mountain and valley, lake and stream. In Eastern philosophy, the classification system is more subtle: there are *Golden Devas*, who facilitate the transmission of solar energy or '*prana*'; *White Devas*, or sylphs, whose domain is the air; *Green Devas*, or nature spirits, intimately involved with the growth of plants; and *Violet Devas*, who create and maintain the etheric structure of all things."

As creatures closely tied to nature, a useful method of studying fairy forms is to look at the element with which each fairy is associated: Earth, water, fire or air. "Little people" living in the Earth (in rocks, caves, quarries, mineshafts, under rivers, inside of burial mounds) can be found in stories from many cultures: Gnomes (first popularized in the ancient writings of Paracelsus); Knockers (a diminutive race of fairy miners found across Europe); the Black Dwarves of Scotland; the Gnomes of France; the Hammerlinge of Germany; the Achachila of Bolivia ... all known for their capricious ways, their dour humor, and their metalworking skills.

Forests always have been haunted by spirits, who are also attuned to the Earth element — particularly tree spirits such as the lovely Dryads found in ancient Greece, the protective Yakshi of India, the shy Bariaua of Melanesian lore, the fierce Apuku of Dutch Guiana and Suci of Brazil, and all the wild-natured Woodwives running through the forests of Europe: the Skogsnufta of Denmark, Swor Skogsfru of Sweden, the Silvanes of Italy (who mate with the Silvani to produce the little Polletti).

Water spirits inhabit lakes, streams, pools, and the ocean depths, including seductive Greek Nereids, the dangerous Nix and Nixies of England, Cacc-halde in Lapland, Kallraden in Sweden, the Bonga Maidens of India, certain Korrigans of Brittany and the fountain faeries of Spain. The Ahuizotl lurks in Mexican lakes and is known to be lethal to fishermen, while his Australian cousin, the Bunyip, lies belowing at the bottom of lakes. In saltwater, we find Mermaids, Mermen, the

Seal People (Selkies, Sea-trows and Roane), the Sirens of Greece, the Margot-la-fee of France and other treacherous, fluid and fishy creatures the world over.

Fire faeries are known for their brilliance, sense of duty, and intensity. The Russian Domovik and the Gabija (fire spirit) of Lithuania are typical of hearth faeries who give protection, aid and luck — but are liable to burn one out of house and home if they feel neglected. *Fire-feyes*, *Fire-drakes*, *Drachen* and *Draks* travel through the air as fiery sparks, leaving an unpleasant smell of sulphur behind to mark their passage. These faeries embody the dualistic nature of the fire element, its power for both good and destruction.

Air is the element of all winged faeries, and those associated with weather phenomena: the whirlwinds caused by hordes of Irish trooping faeries as they pass, the rain storms caused by Burmese Nats, the winds ridden by El Numero (the tempest) across the skies of Spain. Air faeries often take the form of birds, or have claws, or beaks, or feathered wings — like the Tengu in the forests of Japan, the owl-spirits of West Africa, or the strange Alan of the Philippines; part bird, part human, with toes and fingers reversed, hanging bat-like from the trees.

In *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*, published in the 17th century, the Scottish minister Robert Kirk tells us that faeries are "of a middle nature betwixt man and angel. [They have] light changeable bodies, like those called astral, somewhat of the nature of a condensed cloud, and best seen at twilight. These bodies are so pliable through the subtlety of the spirits that agitate them that they can make themselves appear or disappear at pleasure." Two hundred years later, the Irish poet William Butler Yeats also admitted to fairy encounters. He stated that faeries have "no inherent form, but change according to their whim or the mind that sees them. You can not lift your hand without influencing and being influenced by hordes [of faeries]." (Yeats, of course, went on to record the folk beliefs of his native Ireland, as well as to draw upon fairy traditions in his poetry. See the collected poems of William Butler Yeats.)

Like Yeats' poetry (steeped in Irish lore and the scents and rhythms of that land), the fairy paintings surrounding me now portray a very personal vision, yet one born of an ancient tradition that lingers in the land below. It was 1976 when Brian Froud moved from a London studio to the deep green landscape of rural Devon (along with *Faeries* co-illustrator Alan Lee and his family). "As I walked through forests of oak and ivy, across the wild expanse of Dartmoor, among stone circles, Bronze Age ruins and tumbled stones of old castle walls, I began to hear words and stories whispered by the land itself. I listened to those stories, soaking in the spirit of the land with its wealth of folklore and myth. Alan and I created *Faeries*, considered by

some to be a definitive guide to the faery realms ... but I soon discovered that my journey through the land of Faery had only just begun. I learned that the denizens of that land weren't confined to stories from an age long gone. They were all around me, tangible pulses of energy, spirit, emotion and light. They took on form as they stepped into my art, cloaked in shapes of nature and myth. I'd attracted their attention while creating *Faeries*, and they weren't finished with me yet."

They say if you catch the faeries' attention, they won't let you go again easily ... and now I, too, am surrounded by faeries, creatures of Brian's art, vision, scholarship and clear insight.

Here are winged-women poised for motion, shifting forms of flesh and feathers and flowing robes and ribbons of light. ("Faery wings are made of light, emotion and energy," says Brian. "They're not used to fly, for faeries are self-propelling, borne aloft by emotion and thought. Rather, their wings are a visual expression of the etheric forces flowing through their bodies.")

Here are horned men and women, haunting and luminous in the dusky dark. ("Faery horns are a physical manifestation of the process of renewal, regrowth and rebirth. Symbolically, faery antlers represent the animal intuitive powers. In ancient myth, horned figures were shamanic guides to inner worlds. Simple, curved, unbranched horns are a reflection of the female crescent moon; horns on female faeries are a manifestation of healing powers. Just as the moon dies and is reborn, and the horns of the deer are shed and regrown, so faery horns symbolize the transformational processes: the cycle of life, death and rebirth.")

Here are frog-footed faery queens ("In alchemy, the jewel hidden in the head of a toad symbolizes hidden spiritual truth — reminding us that outward appearances can be deceptive.") and sphinx-women roaring at the Moon ("The custodian of primal secrets, full of questions, riddles, rhymes, and tests, this oracular beast crouches at the crossroads of our lives, demanding that we know the answers.") and Green Men peering from the shadows behind their masks of leaves and bark and moss ("A powerful, wild synthesis of man and nature, the vegetative counterpart of humans, the hidden green aspect of mankind.") The invisible world of Faery has been given "something of the spirit age," as Katherine Briggs would say ... and brought to startling, luminous life.

Faerieland is vast and strange, and many are the doors that enter into it. Until Brian Froud's new book appears, I offer some recommendations below — but fair warning: If you turn your attention to them, you may suffer a sudden infestation of faeries all your very own. They are enchanting creatures, but are notoriously pesky, frisky, capricious, and they love stupid tricks. Soon I'll end this article, and the work on Brian's book, and send

Continued on page 84



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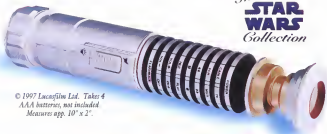
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BY DAN PEREZ

Television shows new and old provide plenty of fantasy viewing this fall.

IT'S THAT MAGIC TIME OF YEAR. COOL BREEZES BRING AN END TO SUMMER'S TYRANNY, Halloween (my favorite holiday, and yours, too, I'd bet) draws near, the summer television repeats are cycling toward their finales, and the TV viewers can not only look forward to new episodes of their favorite shows, but to some new shows, as well. Here's a look at what we can expect from this fall's harvest (all times are Eastern): He's brawny and Teutonic, and he plays Conan the Barbarian! No, not that Schwarzenegger guy, this is the small screen Conan, played by German-born former Mr. Universe Ralf Moeller, who plays Robert E. Howard's swashbuckling hero in *Conan the Adventurer* (syndicated, Mondays). Fans hoping for more of the Cimmerian's adventures and less of a Hercules clone might be in for disappointment. Moeller plays a kinder, gentler Conan in this family-oriented show. Conan's companions in adventure are a dwarf (played by *Seinfeld*'s Danny Woodburn), a viking-like warrior and an acrobatic mute. His adversaries include Karella, a bandit queen with whom he has a "lust-hate" relationship and Hissah Zol, an evil sorcerer. A Barbarian and a Gentleman? We'll have to wait and see. The

competition: Hard to say without time slot and station info at press time. Both NBC and CBS have pretty strong sitcom lineups, ABC has the unstoppable juggernaut of Monday Night Football (and *Timecop*) and WB has *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

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Television's Xena (Lucy Lawless, above) and Hercules (Kevin Sorbo, right) continue to be the most popular series in syndication.





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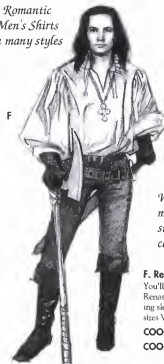
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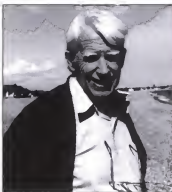
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Agents Scully and Mulder (David Duchovny, right) return to the small screen in *The X-Files*.

homosexuality, genetic engineering, assisted suicide and other hot-button topics, with plenty of farts and vomiting along the way. Think John Waters' *Tiny Toes* and you're not far off the mark. Isaac Hayes provides the voice talent for "Chef" and little Kenny is killed every episode, after which he is devoured by rats. Fun! *South Park* offers something to offend just about everyone, but it's a must-see nevertheless. The competition: Pretty stiff, actually, with highly-rated *Chicago Hope* on CBS and *Law and Order* on NBC.

It's not exactly a spin-off of *The X-Files*, but Fox's *The Visitor* (8 p.m. Fridays) is pretty much designed to cash in on the franchise's appeals. Brought to you by the *Independence Day* team of Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin, the show follows the adventures of a World War II pilot (played by John Corbett, late of *Northern Exposure*) who is abducted by aliens in 1947 over the Bermuda Triangle and then shows up in 1997, still youthful and enhanced with heightened perception, healing powers and a touchy-feely New Age philosophy to dispense. The hitch is that the government wants to capture him and study him. So it's on the run a la Richard Kimble of *The Fugitive* fame. Early reports are that the pilot was less like *X-Files* and more like Fox's somber *Millennium*, which occupies an adjacent time slot, but perhaps the series will settle into its own style. The competition: Principal competition for the slot will come from ABC's popular *Sabrina*, the *Teenaged Witch*, and CBS's venerable kidcom *Family Matters*. NBC's *Players* may take off, too.

Meego (CBS, Fridays, 8:30 p.m.) sounds like a toy company, but he's really an alien (played by Bronson Pinchot) who crashlands into the backyard of a suburban family headed by single father Ed Begley Jr. Meego, who can fly, shrink and replay portions of the day (really useful for those late-in-the-season "remember when you did that ..." episodes),

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sets himself up as nanny for the kids, one of whom is played by Jerry Maguire's cute-as-a-bug Jonathan Lipnicki. Hilarity is then supposed to ensue. The competition: ABC's *Boy Meets World* is probably not much of a threat, but new shows *Players* (NBC) and *The Visitor* (Fox) will likely steal viewers with an overdose of the cutes.

You Wish (ABC, Fridays, 9:00 p.m.) brings us a scruffy, unshaven Zappa-ish genie played by John Ales (*The Nutty Professor*), who grants wishes to his adopted single-parent family (there's a whole lotta single-parent families being adopted this fall, apparently). Ales hails from the manic Robin Williams school of improvisational comedy, so expect a live-action, slacker version of Aladdin's genie and you're close to the mark. Early reports are that hilarity is supposed to ensue, but doesn't. The competition: Fox's *Millennium* will likely steal a lot of viewers, and the remainder will probably seek succor in NBC's *Dateline NBC* or try CBS's *The Gregory Hines Show*.

Teen Angel (ABC, Fridays, 9 p.m.) How's this for high-concept: a teenager (Mike Damus) dies after eating tainted hamburger and returns as a guardian angel for his best friend, whose Mom is played by Maureen McCormick (*Brady Bunch*). Despite its somewhat morbid premise, last-minute recasting and reshooting of the pilot, the show might actually have some genuine hilarity ensue, since its co-producers Al Jean and Mike Reiss worked on a little show called *The Simpsons*. The competition: CBS's *Step by Step*, though getting somewhat long in the tooth, is entrenched in this slot. Genre competition is stiff in the form of Fox's *Millennium*.

Sleepwalkers (NBC, Saturdays, 9 p.m.) follows the exploits of renegade scientists at the Morpheus Institute, a high-tech lab where the scientists, led by Bruce Greenwood (of the late, lamented *Nowhere Man*) actually enter the dreams of their nightmare-plagued clients. "He's a good guy," says Abraham Benrubi (*E.R.*) of his character Vincent Kanef-

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ski. "Actually they sent me a breakdown of how all the main characters relate, and our main guy, who's played by Bruce Greenwood—he's the mind of the system, so to speak. And Vince is the heart of the system, the core of the Institute. Probably the first few episodes, it'll be pretty small in terms of [my] screen time, but once they get going and everybody's backstory gets online, I'll start having more to do. I think episode seven is the first time I go into the dreams." The rest of the dream team is rounded out by Naomi Watts and Jeffrey D. Sams. The show is meant to juice up NBC's Saturday night "Thrillology" along with The Pretender and Profiler. Watch this column for a more in-depth interview with Benrubi. The competition: CBS's *Early Edition* may nab some genre viewers, but the Steven Bochko-produced *Total Security* on ABC will probably be the most serious contender for viewers.

The Wonderful World of Disney (ABC, Sundays 7 p.m.) is back again with a computer-generated Tinkerbell and 16 new made-for-TV movies, as well as recent favorites like *Babe* and *Toy Story*. Disney honcho Michael Eisner will serve as host, and the new films include a remake of the *Love Bug* with Dean Jones, Brandy as *Cinderella*, Richard Dreyfuss as Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, plus some serious fare, including a Holocaust drama. The competition: There's no doubt about that Disney is a powerhouse, but competition for the two-hour slot is actually pretty severe. It includes CBS's *60 Minutes* and *Touched by an Angel* (an entrenched family favorite), NBC's debuting *Jerry*, plus *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill* (both of which lead into *The X-Files*) on Fox and no fewer than four of WB's variably popular sitcoms.

Returning shows include Fox's unstoppable *X-Files*, which effortlessly moved from Friday to Sunday and continues to rack up Emmys for itself and its stars. In an innovative move, creator Chris Carter is shooting only 21 episodes instead of the usual 24, so that the season's cliffhanger ending can be resolved in the hotly anticipated (speculation is at a fever pitch on the Internet) *X-Files* movie next summer. Revelations this year include the origins of the Lone Gunmen, whether Cigarette Smoking Man is really Mulder's dad, and, early on, the resolution of Scully's cancer. Meanwhile, watch for your favorite investigative duo in the movies *Playing God* (Duchovny), *The Mighty* and *Hellcab* (Anderson).

Monday, watch for the return of WB's *Buffey the Vampire Slayer*, which has gotten excellent reviews and good word-of-mouth (much needed for the dubba-dubba-dubba-ya-bee network) for witty scripts, tangy observations and the eye-catching Michelle Gellar (an *All My Children* alumna), who will also be appearing in *Scream 2* and *I Know What You Did Last Summer* on the big screen. Scripts from series creator Joss Whedon (*Toy Story*, *Alien Resurrection*) certainly helped. Despite all this, *Buffey* slipped in the ratings



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Ralf Moeller comes to syndicated television as a kindler, gentler Coran the Adventurer.

(probably due to an oil/water mix with its feel-good family lead-in *7th Heaven*). One change this season include a couple of new cast members: James Marster and Juliet Landau play punked-out vampires who take the place of the recently destroyed villain Master. Jumping to Wednesday, NBC's *3rd Rock*

From the Sun, another consistent Emmy-winner (Kristen Johnston, who plays Sally, nabbed one recently), goes up against ABC's *Drew Carey* in a battle of the hit shows. Our favorite wacked-out aliens are up to their usual unusual antics: Dick (John Lithgow) deals with the fallout from his "marriage" to

The Big Giant Niece (played by Roseanne in the one-hour season opener) Squinty-eyed Harry (French Stewart) tries for a GED, Tommy (Joseph Gordon-Leavitt) starts a garage band and Sally dumps cop Don (Seinfeld's Wayne Knight), seeking greener pastures. Also returning on Wednesdays is UPN's *The Sentinel*.

On Friday, ABC's *Sabrina the Teenaged Witch* is back, and Melissa Joan Hart finds that she needs a license to practice witchcraft. Her Quizmaster (not a product endorsed by Suzanne Sommers) is played by Alimi Ballard (*Arsenio*). This season, *Sabrina* is duking it out in the same time slot with Steve Urkel and *Family Matters*, since the latter moved from ABC to CBS. Call me crazy, but I'm putting my money on the witch.

Also back on Friday is Chris Carter's bleak *Millennium*, which will see some relief thanks to *X-Files* veterans James Wong (taking the reins as executive producer) and Glen Morgan.

Their goal is to juice up the Fox series a bit with some (gasp) humor, ably supplied by *X-Files* wunderkind writer Darin Morgan (Glen's brother). Darin will write an episode revolving around *X-Files* character Jose



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*We all have magic in us, whether we know it or not,
whether we live it or not.*

What's important is how it manifests.

THE ONE- ACT

BY A.M. DELLAMONICA

Illustration by Michael Gibbs

Pre-show: Light test, sound test, props in place. The audience is outside in the lobby.

Her mother used to say Agnes had more conscience than the Supreme Court: Even as a girl she mumbled when she lied, and blushed too. When she went to see the apartment and saw that the landlady was a sweet, white-haired old woman, Agnes nearly lost her capacity for speech, and her skin turned as bright as an ambulance flasher.

On the phone it had seemed simple: Mrs. Dewe wasn't asking for references or a massive security deposit, but she wouldn't show the apartment to a woman on her own. Agnes had managed to stammer that she wouldn't be living by herself. She'd rationalized it, telling herself the apartment would be another dark, menacing hole and the lie wouldn't matter. Running had made her that desperate.

"How long have you been in Beverley, dear?" Mrs. Dewe asked at the top of the stairs. The climb was formidable, two floors straight up, and Agnes had to catch her breath before replying.

"A week," she puffed, pushing away the locks of hair dangling limp in the sweat on her cheeks. "Staying at the Pak 'n' Park."

"That old place?" Mrs. Dewe smiled. Her hair wasn't loose; it was twisted in a neat bun. She'd been on the porch reading when Agnes arrived, and her dress smelled of sunshine, of cotton cooked in vanilla perfume. "George Tobbler's been running that motel to ground for a decade. You'd get a better price on Main Street."

"My parents spent a night there once."

"Ah," Mrs. Dewe said. "A romantic." Agnes shrugged, and the old woman opened the apartment door, stepping back to reveal sunlight pouring across the room like a wash of stage light, exposing the crooked lines of the hardwood floor.

All that light. Agnes quaked, remembering darkness and magic. So much for not wanting it — her mouth was watering.

"Two bedrooms and an office, studio, whatever you want to call it. You see why I don't show it to singles. It's too much for one," Mrs. Dewe said.

"Too much room, or too much rent?" The bedroom doors were side by side, whitewashed portals leading into identical sunbathed cubes.

"Both, really," Mrs. Dewe said. "I always take roommates or couples." Her eyes bored into Agnes. "I'd knock off a bit for someone alone, if they had a job and a reference or two."

Blood floodlit her face again. "Well, there's two of us," she said, sneezing as dust tickled her



in the sky. So what?

W.G.M.

nose. Mrs. Dewe fished a tissue out of the pocket of her dress.

"If you've got a boyfriend I'll want to meet him, dear. Don't fear I'm close-minded about tattoos or earrings. The last kid had both, and dreadlocks too." Agnes blew her nose, gazing ravenously at the windows. She felt stringy and sun-starved.

In her hand, the damp wad of used tissue glowed with a light of its own, and Agnes closed her fingers over it to keep Mrs. Dewe from seeing. "No," she lied, rattled. "It's ... my sister. She'll be joining me next week."

House open. Music plays to set the mood. The stage is dimly lit, and house lights keep the aisles bright while the audience gets seated.

Agnes sat on the sun-drenched floor of her new home, alone with leftover bits of the previous tenants' lives and a scant handful of her own possessions: a nylon duffel bag containing her extra dress, some socks and panties, knitting needles, two death certificates rolled into a sawed-off poster tube.

She sat with her back against the narrow band of wall between the two bedroom doors, facing the windows, and tried to make light burst from her fingertips.

Nothing. Hopefully she was too far from the source. Hopefully here things were the way they should be.

A cloud bullied its way over the sun and memory forced itself on her. She'd been up in the grid changing the bulbs on some of the big Fresnels, secure and happy and in control of her life, the worst thing maybe that she was a little lonely. But who wasn't? It was simple to push away loneliness: fill the time with work that could have waited until the next day, to use up energy that might otherwise keep her awake at night. Follow the rules, work hard, and don't dwell on one's problems, and someday there might just be someone in her life again.

In the meantime Agnes and Celia, the odd little props mistress, had the theater to themselves, and maybe when they were done putting them they could go have a drink and swap stories about actors until the evening was well and truly murdered.

Then the safety lights shattered, smothering her in darkness. Everything was dark but the glow around Celia down on the stage floor below. Sunbeams without sun.

Agnes gaped, and then Celia squealed and dropped to the stage, as though someone had struck her. The stage door opened and closed, and the glowing motes left a dark hole around the man who had come inside. His words vibrated in the barn doors of the Fresnels, words from another reality. Words that belonged in a play, shouted through the darkness. They started with insults, the stranger calling Celia first fairy and then assassin, Celia returning the taunts in kind: wizard, lackey, sycophant, lick-spittle, lapdog. Their voices rose as Agnes's eyes adjusted, the man shouting from the house while Celia inched toward backstage, her voice rising to shrieking sob. She curled and uncurled her child-sized body, hitching on her hands and knees toward backstage, toward the black curtains that hid the prop cabinets and the shop exit.

He didn't know Agnes was above them, quivering next to the husks of the safety lights as they fought like embittered lovers, roving from subject to subject; peers about a king Celia had or maybe hadn't killed, what the pixie dust was doing to the theater, something about a talking wolf. They snapped and interrupted, stepping on each other's lines, until Agnes lost the thread.

Then they fell silent. Agnes became aware of a sneeze building in the back of her throat, an ache in her calves.

The wizard sighed. Glowing dust billowed in lazy circles, puffing away from his mouth as he spoke. "Come back," he said.

Celia hit him no.

The wizard stepped forward and Agnes collapsed off her haunches to her knees, taking a deep breath of the dusty, magic-tainted air. She pointed her flashlight at him, thinking to switch it on so Celia could see him coming, but her hands were numb.

Agnes dropped the flash, 14 feet to the stage floor — oops and clatter and by the way there's an audience up here — but she lit up the wizard anyway, with ribbons of colored light that burst from her fingertips, like shafts of sun through a cloud.

The wizard had flinched and looked up, his face narrow and unexpectedly full of heartache. Celia lunged behind the curtains, grabbed a prop gun off her table and fired, sending a bright silver squid of flame at his head and setting all the magic dust afire. It ignited in a starburst radiating from the gun and the heat rushed up into the grid, bright burning dots on Agnes's skin, blasts of scorching air forcing themselves into her sinus cavities, pumping her full, a stifling fist inside her lungs, her stomach, her womb. The magician screamed, but didn't burn.

And then he vanished, taking the silver fire and all the light with him.

Agnes dropped to her knees and tried to exhale, sneeze, anything to force the dust out of her body, but her lungs were empty. She opened her mouth and sucked hot, dry air, stuck her fingers down her throat to vomit and could only retch once. A single mouthful of burning wetness dropped through the grid. She heard it land on a chair, 14 feet below.

Something small scampered across the risers and chairs of the house.

"Celia?" Agnes had whispered. The house door opened, creating a square of dim light around the fairy.

Celia's wool cap had been knocked astray by the blast, and Agnes saw her ears were pointed. Her white-blond hair was fluffed and tossed like a dandelion. Celia was tiny — everyone had noticed that much — but suddenly Agnes saw

Agnes lit up the wizard,
from her

how long and ugly her fingers were. The knuckles looked like knots in twigs, and her fingernails came to

points at the ends. She had one hand pressed to her head, and silvery fluid — blood? — leaked out from under her palm and dropped into the carpet below. There was a smell coming off her, too: crushed lilacs.

Then the door swung shut, and Agnes had crept through the lights to the far end of the grid, moaning when the bars holding the instruments bent aside to make way for her.

She was on a bus out of town before the ink dried on the farewell note she left the company.

And now she was in Beverley, less than a mile from the hospital where she was born. The sun beat back the cloud and Agnes heaved the memory away, crawling into the bedroom closest to the stairway, dragging her bag after her. This one would be 'her' room, she decided.

Someone — maybe the boy with dreadlocks — had left a stack of art supplies under the windowsill. She snatched up a coffee-stained piece of paper and a black stub of crayon. "Magic exists. So what?" she wrote. She leaped up, strode to the kitchen, and stuck her slogan to the fridge with a plastic ladybug magnet.

It wasn't nearly as important as trying to figure out what she'd tell Mrs. Dewe when she couldn't produce a sister.

Or, for that matter, the rent.

"House lights down. House music down."

"Lighting cue one ... go!"

Curtain

Treasure in the other bedroom saved her from having to wear one of her stinking dresses to the laundromat. A pair of biking shorts and a peach tank top were crouched like spiders on the closet shelf with a peach hair-tie. She put it all on, even pulling the hair out of her face, and refused to think about how she looked or why the clothes had been left behind.

She trotted down through the oven of the stairwell and, popping out onto the porch, nearly rammed the landlady.

"Mrs. Dewe!"

"Dear, I'm sure you're up to calling me Rachel." The old woman steadied herself on the porch rail.

"Rachel," she managed. The name rolled on her tongue like the name of a strange country.

Mrs. Dewe settled on the wicker loveseat and opened her book. "I think you must be Agnes's sister."

Surprise made her drop the bag. She bent to retrieve it, aware that the low neck of her shirt was probably flashing her breasts at the old ... at Rachel ... and suddenly, not caring.

"Yeah," she said, scooping the bag with one hand and sticking out the other, sweaty paw. "Nice to meet you."

That sharp, nosy stare. "I'm afraid I don't remember if Agnes told me your name."

"Angelica."

"Well. Twins, how nice."

"She didn't tell you?" she said. "That's odd."

"Mmm," Mrs. Dewe said. "How are you finding the place?"

"Empty," she laughed. "We came out here with nothing but the clothes on our backs ... oh, don't worry, we can pay the rent."

"Course you can," Rachel said, a bit uneasily.

"I'm off to scare up a job right now, as a matter of fact," she said. Then she winked. "That is, after I wash these baggy old dresses of Aggie's on the off chance she ever leaves the house."

She sauntered down the steps, around the corner, expecting the trees themselves to erupt into catcalls, into hisses, into heckling and

with a patient. I had to go out once, to fill in the tax forms and give them my social security number.

The secretary said to me, "You can come get your check every other Friday."

I peered at her through my glasses. "Can you mail them?" I whispered. By then I'd started speaking more softly.

ANGELICA

Beverly Theatre paid under the table, but Convivial kept asking for my social security number. On the night before my first payday, I dreamed Agnes was standing in front of my mirror, holding her birth certificate in one bleeding hand, and her social security card in the other.

AGNES

I woke up in my sister's room, naked and on my feet, pressed against her precious mirror with a runny nose. I jumped back, and two sets of identification dropped onto the floor. One set had Angelica's name on it.

ANGELICA

I never read the news, just the headlines. One day I saw one that said: "Scientists Find Difference in 'Identical' Twins." Under that it said "One twin often homosexual." I laughed out loud.

Well, why not?

AGNES

I tried to write Justin a short letter, explaining why I'd run away. Justin was tall and dark and promiscuous, the sort of man who never

with ribbons of colored light that burst fingertips, like shafts of sun through a cloud.

cries of "Cheat, cheat!"

Down a lane shaded by arching oaks to the laundromat, where she abandoned the dresses — 'Aggie' would have a fit — to a Maytag quarter-fed dirt thrasher. She jaywalked to the coffee shop to pick up a latte Aggie wouldn't want to pay for, flipped through the local alternative rag. Theater listings squeezed into a blot on the sixth page and she memorized names and addresses. With no resumé she was screwed getting anything as good as head electrician, no making light this season for little Angelica, but maybe she could do gofer work ...

Like Celia.

She shrugged. Celia was Aggie's hang-up. So a fairy on the lam scammed a job running props. She got all her cues right, which was all that mattered. Damn good, actually, considering Celia couldn't read.

She ordered a cinnamon roll, engulfed it in three mouthwatering bites, and pointed her tits at the first theater on her list.

When she got home, she saw that Rachel had put their names in the plate by the doorbells: "Mennesinni," their last name, was in tidy black script. Under it in gold, their initials were bigger: "A. and A."

Dueling Monologues

ANGELICA

Nobody could offer me a full-time job, but I landed work buying props and costume pieces for two different shows. I browsed secondhand stores and rummaged through the storerooms of the theaters. I bought two more baggy dresses for Agnes and a big mirror for me. Oak frame, free-standing, gorgeous! I took a couple of tank-tops from the costume morgue at Theater Convivial and once, just for the buzz, I went into the sporting goods store. My heart was on my tongue! I walked out a minute later with a new pair of shorts trapped under the elastic of my black ones, snug against my belly button.

AGNES

I got a job working mornings for a friend of Mrs. Dewe's, a doctor named Gunter Andreassen. His secretary couldn't work mornings, so he set his phone to forward to my place whenever he was

late to sleep with mousy, near-sighted techies. I couldn't write it.

What could I say — The theater's enchanted, get out?

I always ended up with maladjusted character actors or sound designers. I never got the leading men.

ANGELICA

I thought I saw Celia in a patch of scrub at the edge of town, but it was another one, a little brown-haired pixie this time, with burns on her arms and a cowboy hat hiding the tips of her ears. Or maybe it was just a weird little kid. I didn't tell Agnes.

AGNES

I tell myself a thousand times a day it doesn't matter. Life goes on. I don't have to understand it. I just have to get through. I just wish I could know the rules again.

Scene Change: Stage lights down, perhaps to black to cover actors' exits. Technicians wearing stage blacks come on stage, remove furniture and props, and put out set pieces for the next scene, using taped markers on the floor to make certain everything is in the right place. Unless the company is short of instruments, the scene change has its own lighting cue.

Kerry was blonde, nubile, everything Agnes ever wanted to eat but was always afraid to order. Her nipples were almost purple in the dim light of the prop room. The salty taste of her hung in the air, pervasive as dust.

"Come home with me," she said.

"Can't," said Angelica, pulling on a new pair of stolen jeans.

"Your sister won't die if you don't come home. Just this once."

"She's twitchy," Angelica said. "I don't want to upset her."

Kerry sighed and bounced noisily on the bed, a square wooden frame and old springs. Clouds of dust billowed from the mattress with every bounce. "Twitchy, twitchy, twitchy," she said, enjoying the sound of it, trying her various accents out on the word: English, Texan, Virginian. "Tuhwitchee ..."

"She had a kind of scare a few months ago," Angelica said, frowning at the dust. Her allergies should have been screaming. "I'm taking care of her until she's over it."

Kerry stopped bouncing and leaned close. "A scare? Like a rape scare?"

Angelica shook her head. "One of the girls at her ... at her job ... at her office ... had this creep after her."

"A stalker?"

"Yeah," Angelica said, "Exactly. He turned up one night and tried to grab her. The friend, not Agnes. Aggie ..." she paused for effect, "shot him."

Kerry sucked air. "Dead?"

"No, no."

"Your sister carries a gun?" Kerry asked. She sneezed suddenly.

"I think her boss kept one in his desk. She's scared he's after her."

"The boss?"

"No, the stalker. Maybe the cops, too."

"Man, how totally Desdemona," Kerry breathed, playing the scene in her mind, filing the emotions for use later. "Man. I'd be in therapy!"

Not a bad idea, Angelica mused. "I'd better go," she said.

ASIDE — moment when a character comes onstage and speaks, to themselves or the audience, without the other characters knowing what she is saying. Set lights are usually dimmed: The speaker is lit by a spotlight or an instrument hung especially for the purpose. Such lights are referred to as "specials."

"Bless me Father, for I have sinned," Agnes said, and then she faltered. "I don't remember when the last time was."

"It's OK," said the priest.

She knotted her hands together, loathing him for being young and liberal when she wanted someone old, reactionary, and paternal. "I'm pretending to be my own twin sister," she said.

"Go on."

"I don't have a twin sister," she said. She didn't want him to think she was impersonating someone who really existed.

"You invented her completely."

"Yes," she said. "But it's gone too far. She has a job, and a girlfriend ..."

"You."

"Pardon?" Agnes wiped her streaming eyes and wished she'd remembered to bring tissues with her.

"You have a job. You have a girlfriend," the priest said gently. Agnes blushed. She hadn't meant to admit Angelica was playing perversely with the company babe.

"I'm stealing things, too," she said, to change the subject. "As her. Yesterday she just threw on a sweater in the used clothing store where she was shopping for props. In the blazing heat, and they didn't even notice. Beautiful black wool," she said dreamily. "Like touching thunderclouds."

"You won't be able to wear it if the heat doesn't break," the priest observed.

"She ..."

"You."

"I took it for the wool. I knit. To relax. I'm unraveling it. I couldn't help myself." She sobbed violently, drawing the dry church air down her throat like sandpaper. "I'm cannibalizing myself. I'm eating my own life."

"There are tissues under the seat in there."

"Thank you." She blew her nose loudly, drowning out the quiet whistle of the priest, blowing air between his teeth as he thought about what she'd said.

"What about your family?" he said at last. "Is there anyone you could real in touch with? Someone who could ground you back into your real life?"

"There's nobody," she said. "My parents died." Nothing left but two death certificates, pressed between the floorboards and the foam mattress Angelica had stolen for her.

"Friends?"

"I just moved here," she said. "I barely know my landlady. I don't know anyone else."

"Well ... More whistling. ... how'd you end up in Beverley?"

"I was born here," she whispered, pulling out a two-inch stack of tissues and wiping her eyes and nose with the entire wad.

"Tell me," the priest said.

"Yes?"

"Has anything happened to you recently? Anything upsetting?"

Silence expanded between them for minutes on end, like an intermission.

"Why don't you just tell me to stop?" she snapped. The words blew through the confessional curtains, echoed back from the ceiling of the church.

Agnes ran.

"Ready flashpots."

"Flashpots ready."

"Flashpots, go."

Scene: Agnes has dragged the mirror out of Angelica's room and is standing in front of it in the foyer in front of their rooms. She is wearing a short nylon bathrobe and her hair is unbound, hanging loose and unkempt. Angelica, in the mirror, is wearing a short dress the same color as the robe. Her hair is loose as well, but instead of looking messy it appears to have been styled. She looks like she's going out.

AGNES

You have to stop this.

ANGELICA

(speaking from the mirror) I'm not doing anything wrong.

Bless me Father, for time was. I'm

AGNES

The stealing.
ANGELICA

We're sleeping on the floor.

AGNES

You're going to get us jailed.

ANGELICA

I'm taking care of you, Aggie.

AGNES

(near hysteria) You'd tell them to call me. You'd tell 'em I'd pay your bail, and they'd come here looking for me!

ANGELICA

All right, I'll stop stealing.

AGNES

And the job?

ANGELICA

Aggie, we need the cash.

AGNES

I could work, if you weren't at the theater all the time.

ANGELICA

I'm not quitting.

AGNES

Be reasonable.

ANGELICA

I'm not quitting. I'm in love with a beautiful actress.

AGNES

(sagging to kneel on the floor, pounding the mirror with both hands, and screaming) Stop it, stop it, stop it.

There is a flash near her hands and a sound of breaking glass. Lights to black as Agnes and Angelica both scream, then Angelica's voice fades away, leaving only Agnes.

AGNES

(whispering) Don't go.

She was half asleep, picking at the glass cuts on the heels of her hands, when the phone jolted her to alertness. "Doctor's office," she said, her voice professional but lifeless.

"Agnes, it's Shirley." Gunter's secretary.

"Hi," she said. She dictated the four messages in a monotone. She had been on her foam mattress ever since the fight with Angelica, picking up the phone when it happened to ring, rising out of a fitful doze to talk to Gunter's patients.

"Thanks," Shirley said. "You're free for the day."

"Bye." Agnes dropped the phone and drew in a deep, tranquilizing breath. She heard a soft knock on the door.

"Agnes, dear, are you there?"

Agnes leaped to her feet. "Come in, Mrs. Dewe." She heard the creak of a door. "I'm just getting ... changed. Be out in a minute." Her heart hammered. Had she heard the screaming last night? The fireball?

"I was hoping you'd come to the graveyard with me," Mrs. Dewe said, her voice high and false with nerves. "I usually go with Karen Jennings down the street, but she's in Portland seeing her grandchildren."

"OK," she said. She picked the least wrinkled dress off the floor and shook it, scowling at her cut hands, the marks like lightning on her skin. She'd keep them in her pockets.

"You girls ought to let me give you a table. There's one in my basement, with two chairs. It's a lovely birch — circular, I seem to recall, with drop sides. You could snuggle it up against the window here."

I have sinned. I don't remember when the last pretending to be my own twin sister...

"Thank you," Agnes called. "I'll ask Angie." Maybe if they got a table she could forestall Angelica stealing one.

"Looks like she's left a note here for you, dear."

Agnes pulled the dress over her head and snatched up a brush. She came out, dragging it through hair that was as knotted as her nerves. Sunlight washed the bare wooden floor. Two plates drying on a tea towel on the counter were the only props to prove the apartment had occupants.

"We will get furniture eventually," she mumbled. "It won't always look so abandoned." They'd made the rent last week with five dollars to spare.

"I know you will, dear." Mrs. Dewe handed the folded page back to her, admiring the view from the window.

On its back in crayoned square letters, her slogan: "Magic exists. So what?"

On the front, Angelica's handwriting swooped across the page like a flock of starlings, lurid red ink from a magic marker — stolen — out of the Convivial costume shop. "I've taken your check to put in the bank. Sorry about last night. Angie." Agnes frowned and checked her purse. Her bank card was gone.

She didn't remember writing the note. Not surprising, though. She'd practically been hysterical. She turned sharply, looking for the broken mirror. The glass was gone and Angelica's door was closed.

"I'm ready to go," she said, kicking the note under Angelica's door and following Mrs. Dewe outside. "Do you drive?"

"No, it's close. When I'm tired I take a bus home."

"OK." Agnes followed Mrs. Dewe outside and up the streets, blocked from the light by a wall of malevolent trees.

"This is the old part of town, isn't it?" she said finally.

"The old Italian part." Mrs. Dewe stopped at the cemetery gate and pointed back at the houses, at a rope of garlic hanging on a door. "I've seen your family name in here, you know. Probably distant relatives." She probed Agnes. "Oh, I hope that doesn't upset you."

"No." They were walking over people who'd had the bad fortune to die after the cemetery forbade standing monuments, stepping over grave markers as small and dull as postage stamps.

"Well, here's my Harry," said Mrs. Dewe, stopping under a willow next to a marble slab the color of a raw steak.

Agnes could see her grandmother's grave.

It was as familiar as her hand, one of two pictures her mother had sometimes cried over, the picture of her grandmother's grave and the odd shot of Agnes at seven, running alongside the glass wall of a building after Uncle Vinnie's wedding. She was dressed up and curled and scabby-kneed, a devil-grin on her face and an illusion of a second Agnes in the tinted glass, Agnes running beside herself. Her arm reached toward the building and her outstretched hands, real and reflected, were hidden by the billowing red skirt. She could have been holding her own hand.

"Will you be OK for a minute?" she asked Mrs. Dewe, and walked away without waiting for a reply. She thought she heard an echo of her mother's sobs. She already knew what she'd find.

Huddled at the feet of grandma's monstrous, tasteless angel ascending, was a cherub. "Angelica Mennesinni," said the plaque. "We who knew her but three days cherish her nonetheless."

Dandelions grew at the cherub's feet, each one of them twitching in the breeze. Agnes swayed, slammed by another horrid flashback. They looked like Celia's hair.

"Odd coincidence." Mrs. Dewe had come up behind her.

"She'll laugh when I tell her," said Agnes, each word like a mouth-

ful of ice.

"I think she will. She's a tough cookie, your sis."

On the way home, she kept telling herself over and over, don't faint, don't faint, don't faint, and reminding herself that she could bolt upstairs as soon as they got home.

"Oh," Mrs. Dewe paused at the corner, looking up the street. Kerry was sitting on the steps of the house.

Don't faint, Agnes told herself again.

"It's all right," she stammered. "She's a friend of Angie's." Mrs. Dewe nodded and resumed walking. Agnes marched beside her, feeling Kerry's eyes crawling over them with voracious curiosity.

She hopped up when they finally got to the porch. "You must be Mrs. ..."

"Rachel."

"Rachel. And Agnes, right?" Kerry said.

Agnes nodded. Her blood pressure went up another notch and her face burned.

"I'm Kerry Rollin. From the show. Man, they aren't kidding when they say identical!"

Agnes kissed Mrs. Dewe on the cheek. "I'll go back any time you want," she whispered, and Mrs. Dewe went into the house, damp-eyed.

Kerry exhaled noisily. "I'm looking for Angelica."

"She went to the bank for me," Agnes said. "She'll be back in a minute. You can wait inside if you want," she offered reluctantly.

"Yeah, I'm roasting." Kerry hopped up, breasts bouncing.

Quick changes: Actors walk backstage and are stripped by one or two technicians before stepping into clothes held ready by a third. Timed to the second, backstage changes are often conducted in less than a minute, in nearly no light. What light is provided is shielded to keep it from leaking through set walls or under the cracks in doors.

Agnes made tea for Kerry, excused herself and went into her room. She opened the window, and slid out onto the ledge, thinking all the while of the time she almost fell off the catwalk, 60 feet from the fly gallery to the stage floor.

She edged the three feet to Angelica's window. One arm-wreck-

ing heaven later she was in, ripping four buttons off the dress as her stomach scraped over the sill. She dove for the jeans and a tank top. Out of habit she turned to check herself in the mirror, and she nearly wet her pants. The mirror wasn't broken.

"What a laugh," she muttered, but her voice was a little shaky. She turned her back on it and went out the window again, not so cautious this time, along the ledge, quick hop down to the neighbor's garage — if the cats could do it so could she. Down to the fence, from there to the ground.

She rushed up the steps to rescue Agnes from Kerry.

Special effect for scenes set in enchanted forests or undersea: Use black lights (also called specials) to make fluorescent paint on the stage floor to glow.

Note: Anything white worn by the actors or audience members, white props and set pieces, programs printed on white paper and white tissues will also be affected.

Agnes' knees were so weak she might have been trying to walk in an earthquake. She clung to each pew as she passed it, and collapsed in the confessional. "Bless me father. Last time was ten days, no... eleven, no..."

"I remember," the priest said, his voice dry but good-humored, like wine.

"Okay," She started to cry. "I... she got me a kitten.

"Your sister?"

"Uh-huh," she sniffled, wiping glowing trails onto the back of her hand, biting her lips to keep from breaking into out and out wails.

"Your imaginary sister," the priest said.

"I don't know anymore. The mirror's fixed and it feels like skin when I touch it. When she went out with Kerry our... my hands didn't have the cuts on them anymore. But now I'm me they do. And the grave, and I didn't remember the note..." She ran out of air and coughed.

"Take a deep breath," the priest said. Agnes filled her lungs and then sneezed. "There."

"I accused her of stealing the damn cat. She... she forced herself to stop and breathe again. "She was really hurt."

"Let's take this one step at a time," he said soothingly.

Agnes wiped at her nose and eyes with the hem of her dress and then reached under the confessional bench. "Where'd the tissues go?" she asked.

"One of the kids must've taken them," the priest said. "I found them all scattered under the pews."

Agnes stared down at the tear and snot trails on her hands, luminous with pixie dust. She remembered crying and blowing her nose onto the wedge of dusty tissues.

"Kind of creepy, actually, the way they skated around in the drafts. It took me forever to clean them up. To catch them all. Hello? Child?"

"Can a box of tissues be enchanted?" Agnes mumbled.

He chuckled indulgently and murmured a response, but Agnes didn't hear it. She made her way out on legs that were suddenly steady even though they were numb as posts.

The cat met her at the door. She bent down and lifted him, a tiny mewling bundle, ginger colored and hyperactive, with a peach-colored collar around his neck. The price tag for the collar was still attached. She plucked it off and the kitten twitched, startled by the sound. He dug his claws into her palm. She sneezed.

Agnes scratched him behind the ears as she carried him up the steps. Angelica's door was closed.

She knocked. "Angie?"

The cat mewled at her, wide-eyed.

"Angie, I'm sorry."

She opened the door. The room was empty.

(Fade and freeze for next scene.)

The cat made her sneeze, six or seven times in the morning as a wake-up call, more if he happened to scratch. Agnes sneezed and coughed a weekend away, blowing her nose into the diminishing roll of toilet paper. By Monday she felt — finally — like she was getting a grip on herself. She called Beverly Theatre, as herself, as Agnes, and called Angelica in sick. She lay in bed, knitting a plan

together. Calls to the theatres to say Angelica was quitting without notice, a farewell letter to Kerry.

She'd be alone again.

Gunter had told a couple of his friends about her. She could take calls full-time, live on the phone job and never set foot in a theatre again. The rules hadn't changed at all. If she worked, didn't think about herself too much, eventually she'd earn somebody to keep the loneliness away.

The cuts on her hands — old healing mirror cuts and new infected cat bites — pulsed with her heartbeat, soft relief.

She sneezed 15 times in a row, blew her nose, and dozed. The cat, as yet unnamed, curled up in a warm handful on the pillow against her neck.

Angelica woke to a sound like a gunshot and saw that a crack had traced its way into the top of her mirror. She felt hot and feverish, liquid rumbled in her lungs and nausea tossed her around like loose barrels on a storm-wracked ship. She retched, reached blindly for a tissue, wiped hard, crackling paper across her mouth. Saliva smeared the red letters of her note about the bank.

She slipped it over.

"Magic exists. So what?"

"I'm gonna die," she thought.

Poor Agnes, always the one with the allergies, inhaled all that burning magic dust coming off Celia —

Angelica woke to a
had traced its

pixie dust, the wizard called it — and now somehow she'd caught cold, and was sneezing it all back up again, blowing it out through her sinus passages. And when the magic was flushed out, Agnes would be all alone again.

Angelica's stomach broke over a wave and she held her last latte down grimly.

The phone rang, and she only made it there by crawling. The cat stood in front of Agnes's door, stiff-legged, watching her.

"Sing for me," Angelica said. The effort of sounding normal made sweat break out on her forehead.

"Hi, yummy," Kerry's thrilling voice, sexy with sleep. It was late.

"Hi, sweetness. Did you just get home?"

"Yes, rehearsal ran late. Did she get it?"

"Get what?"

"I got into the weapons locker yesterday."

"Huh?"

"The gun. Doesn't Agnes still want it?"

"You got us a prop gun?"

"Left it in the stairwell this afternoon, like you said."

Cold sweat dropped onto the wood floor from her forehead. Agnes will recognize a prop gun.

"Come on, she works in an office. You said she'd get a real one if this didn't work out. You said she was scared."

"I did," Angelica said, scraping for the memory. "I mean, I know. I'll ask her if she got it. Thanks." Agnes must have impersonated her.

"Zero prob. I mean, I can't have you over until she's done bed-wetting, am I right?" Kerry said. "Sleep well, love," she added, and hung up. Angelica could smell the grin on the other end.

"I'll save us," Angelica whispered, though she didn't quite know how.

She forced herself to stand, tottered to the bathroom, and wiped the red ink off her mouth with the last of the toilet paper. As she dropped the tissue in the toilet she saw Agnes was still filling up the garbage with her tissues, overflowing the waste basket with damp

twists that had to be dumped later ... Angelica shuddered. She hated the feel of them. Damp snotty shrouds, sick.

Was it the nausea, or were they twinkling?

She collapsed onto the toilet, curling up with her head in her hands, sipping shallow mouthfuls of air and stealing the occasional peek at the glittering basket of tissues. Finally she got her stomach under control and took the tissues into her room. Opening each gooey sheet with care, she rubbed the contents on the surface of the mirror, gagging.

Stage trick: If someone is firing a gun on-stage and is meant to hit something, holes are bored into the object being shot and in the stage wall behind it. A string is then threaded through the object, which may have been weakened in strategic places. When the actor fires, a technician yanks the cord, pulling the object against the set wall to shatter it.

Angelica had to go.

The mirror reflected the stars and trees above her perfectly, and the sky vibrated up and down. Agnes had laid it over a shopping cart like a stretcher, and every pebble on the sidewalk was bouncing it wrathfully, threatening to shatter it and her hopes both.

It was a relief to get to the graveyard, even though she had to strain to push the cart wheels through the grass, wearing ruts between the graves, lurching when the cart wheels slid across one of the tiny memorial plates.

She dragged the mirror the last few yards and propped it on Grandma's angel. Then she stepped around the mirror, behind the

"Come on, Aggie, it's a prop."

"So what?" Aggie laughed bleakly. "Magic exists, right?"

"Getting rid of me won't change that," Angelica said.

Agnes rolled six blanks in her hand and then blew golden snot into her palm, covering the bullets. They shimmered as she slipped them into the six chambers, leaving sticky trails like aurora borealis on the grip. "I'm going to shoot the mirror," she said shakily, "and you're going to go back ..." she pointed at the cherub.

"Suit yourself." Angelica bit off the words coldly, but tears welled up in her eyes. They condensed on the surface of the mirror, bright as moonbeams, and began to trace their way down the glass. "I hope you feel better about the big bad dangerous world out there now that you've worked out a few of the rules."

"My child!" The priest, closer now. "Please, put down the gun!"

Angelica shrieked laughter, revealing bright red welts on her lips where she'd bitten them.

"Stop it!" Agnes shouted.

"Go ahead and do it if you're going to!" Angelica screamed. Then there was a flash of lightning, so close it seemed the stars had all gone nova. The streetlights exploded, sowing sharp pieces into the howling wind.

Darkness and magic, again. Agnes gasped, expecting to choke on hot pixie dust. She got a mouthful of rain. This time she knew what to do.

She pressed the gun against a glaze-smooth surface.

*sound like a gunshot and saw that a crack
way into the top of her mirror.*

cherub until it was between them. Wind whipped her hair into knots.

"We have to talk," she said.

"I'm happy to talk, Aggie, you don't have to banish me."

"You think I want to?" The tears were already loose, though in the darkness her reflection's face was dry. Agnes sobbed. "I can't be two people any more!"

"I'm not just a figment of your imagination," Angelica said. "I'm not you."

"I know," said Agnes. She pointed at the cherub. "You're a ghost." Lightning flashed overhead as they fell to their knees on either side of the mirror, heads bowed, sobbing together. Agnes's hands clawed at the sod in front of her; Angelica's seemed to cling to the bottom of the wooden frame of the mirror.

Rain soaked them both, mirror girl and flesh girl, and they might have wept until dawn if Agnes hadn't heard someone calling her.

"Child!" The priest, struggling to close the gate against the wind. Agnes craned her neck, saw the church windows looming high over the graveyard.

"You have to go," she said frantically.

Angelica shook her head. "There's gotta be a way to separate us, Aggie. Give me more time ..."

"You've enchanted the mirror. Soon I'll be the shadow-sister."

"I'm not stealing anything from you!" Angelica's eyes were wounded, as when Agnes accused her of stealing the kitten. "This isn't some split personality thing."

"I don't have a life any more."

"So getting rid of me will get you one? What are you going to do, take up shoplifting? Seducing a few leading ladies ..."

"Shhhh!"

"The priest isn't going to overhear me, dummy. Anyway, what do you care? I'm not you. You said it yourself." She pointed at the cherub. "That thing proves it, right?"

Agnes got to her feet, sneezing. Angelica didn't move.

"Look," Angelica said. "I don't even have to mimic you any more."

"I'm not listening." She pulled out the gun.

"Aggie, no," Angelica whispered.

Thunder rumbled but this time there was no flash. Agnes heard the priest's wet running shoes stumbling forward.

She pulled the trigger, falling backward in a shower of cold broken shards. A thread of lightning stitched two clouds above her, and in the light she found herself staring up at Grandma's angel as the priest clamped both his hands down her arm. "You'll be all right," he chanted, over and over.

In darkness, she opened her hand and let the prop gun drop out.

"It's a fake," she said, spitting on rainwater.

"You'll be ..."

"It's over," Agnes said. "Lights down and curtain." She felt a flash flood of grief break loose inside her and pressed her hands against her mouth to dam back the screams for her dead sister.

Someone sneezed by her ear.

Curtain Call

"Tell me the truth. Did you mean to shoot the cherub instead of me, or did you just miss the mirror?"

"And you got mad at me for asking if you'd stolen little Hamlet."

"Just answer me."

"I'm not saying a word."

"Aha. So it was an accident."

"Well, you just go ahead and believe that if you want to."

"Jeez, what's it gonna take? Do I have to get you laid? What?"

"No thank you. I'm happy with you and the cat."

"I think I have a right to know if I owe my entire existence to sheer dumb luck."

"We all do, don't we?" Agnes said.


"Did you mean to shoot the cherub or not?"

"Not. What kind of ice cream do you like?"

"Cherry," Angelica said, sighing. "You like?"

"Mint chocolate."

"Well, push up your glasses and I'll buy you a cone."

Hand in hand, they walked out into the hot wash of sunshine on the sidewalk. 

*A knight should always choose his battles.
But sometimes his battles choose him.*

LORD MADOC AND THE RED KNIGHT

BY RICHARD PARKS

Illustration by Doug Andersen

IN THE TIME OF THE LAST GREAT Rebellion there lived a Cymric lord named Madoc. He was a just man, also handsome and strong, but being a man—and a Welshman at that—he was a little mad. The times being what they were it was hardly noticeable.

As the tale is told it was in the autumn of the Year of Our Lord 1281. When Madoc's yearly service to Prince Llwellyn was done he came home to his keep in Powys to find his lady gone and the servants in tears, wringing their hands.

"What has happened?" he asked, as you can well imagine.





His lady's maid spoke for them all. "Three English knights came not an hour since and took the lady Gwynfyf prisoner. By their own word they plan to deliver her to the saesres king Edward as hostage and surety of your good behavior."

"Fighting the English is good behavior, to my mind," Madoc sighed, "but I feel certain they will not agree."

The maid held up a long strip of cloth. "She dropped this as she was taken."

Madoc recognized his lady's sun veil. "Then I will return it to her, for Gwynfyf does so hate to freckle."

Weary as he was, Madoc did not pause for either rest or refreshment. He armed himself, remounted his best destrier, and set out in the direction the English had taken, his lady's veil tied about his right arm.

Speed was important, but not killing his only mount was even more so if he expected to catch the English or be ready to strive with them if he did. Nor did he think the English could have gotten very far encumbered by their captive. He sent two of his servants to scout ahead on lighter mounts and hoped for the best.

The leaves on oak and ash were starting to turn. Lord Madoc rode through hills alive with color, but he would not let himself notice. His madness was such that sometimes the beauty around him was too much to ignore; he could spend days wandering the hills, forgetting food and drink, locked in an ever-changing prison of wood, water, and stone.

All of Madoc's close kin and his servants besides knew that the Lady Gwynfyf had been the great sea-anchor of his life, keeping Madoc's mind focused and his purposes clear. Madoc knew it better than anyone. He loved Gwynfyf and he feared for her, yes, and perhaps those two emotions counted most. Madoc hoped so. But he feared for himself as well, and madness was not so clouding that he could deny it. And so it was with a Gordian Weave of surprise, relief, and worry that he discovered that the English knights were, in simple fact, waiting for him.

Madoc came to one of the many shaded streams that fed into the Wye and paused to let his mount drink a bit. A new flash of color caught his eye in the meadow beyond. He tried to ignore it but he could not. It was too much of a mystery; it was the wrong sort of color in the wrong place, an open, grassy meadow with no trees. Madoc let himself notice it, and the mystery was quickly solved.

He saw three fine pavilions erected on the far edge of the meadow, one of gleaming silver damask, one of the deepest black silk, and another of red satin. Madoc stared long and hard at them, allowing them fully into his notice and, as it sometimes did, his madness made for very clear understanding.

I know not who these men may be, but they are no common knights.

Madoc urged his mount across the stream and out into the open grass. Almost immediately he saw a young man walking to meet him, a blond youth who — Madoc would surely have sworn — was not there a moment before. Yet the lad was here now, and Madoc took that as certainty enough. The stranger wore a tabard banded in white, black, and red, and he was armed with sword and dagger.

He stopped before Madoc and bowed, saying, "I am squire and servant to the knights you seek," he said, "sent to greet you honorably on their behalf and to make this proposal: Choose and challenge any one among them to meet you in combat. If you win, your lady goes free. If you lose, your choice is death or fealty to Edward of England."

"Hardly a choice at all," Madoc said dryly, "but for their presumption in laying hands on my lady I intend to prove my strength against all of them. Go and tell them so."

The squire started to turn away, but hesitated, then spoke again. "Lord Madoc, I know you are a brave man, but please think again. It is your lady who will bear much of the burden of your failure, as your lady must. For her sake, if not your own, I ask you to reconsider."

Madoc put his hand on his sword then, but the squire did not flinch or reach for his own weapon. He merely stood there, waiting. As angry as Madoc was he could not remain that way since, although he tried greatly, he could find insult in neither the lad's

voice nor his manner. The boy's concern seemed genuine. After a moment Madoc let his irritation go, vowing to place it where it rightly belonged.

"Well, then, take me to your masters," he said, and let the squire lead the way.

When Madoc dismounted to greet his enemies there was no sign of Gwynfyf. What he saw now was the same three fine pavilions looking, if anything, richer and even more fine at close sight. A banner pole was fixed to the ground before each, bearing a plain standard of white, or black, or red. Below that in each case hung a blank shield of the same color as the banner.

Odd that there's no device. . . . The English were keen for such things, and even Prince Llywelyn had felt the need to adopt a coat of arms in the English style. But to most of the Cymric warriors the Draig Goch served well enough for all. Madoc approached the white pavilion alone, the squire having vanished again.

The flap to the damask pavilion opened and the White Knight came out.

Madoc had no other words to describe him. His armor was of silver: greaves, breastplate, and vambraces all polished to a nearly mirror sheen, and yet still somewhat blackened as if tarnished, so the effect was more gray-white than metal. His helm bore no crest. He was as tall as Madoc yet gaunt; his hair was white and his face haggard. Pale as he was he projected such a depth of strength and will that Madoc almost took a step back. It was all Madoc could do to meet the White Knight's gaze and, with the clarity of vision that madness sometimes brings, he saw what was plainly there to see.

"I know you, my lord," he said slowly. "I am strong, but I am not your equal. Mountains, rivers, and all the seas of the world are not your equal. I would fight you despite that, but I know that your strength would grow as mine waned and in the end I could not win. For the love I bear my lady, I will not challenge you."

The White Knight did not speak. He merely nodded his head in acknowledgment and Madoc went to the next tent in the meadow, the one of black silk. Madoc was not surprised to see the Black Knight emerge from it.

HIS HAIR WAS BLACK. HIS eyes were black. His armor was beyond black. Rather than a surface, Madoc felt himself looking into an abyss from which neither light nor hope could ever escape. His helm bore the crest of a grinning skull. Madoc forced himself to meet the Black Knight's gaze, and again he spoke. "I know you, my lord. I have seen you in battle often, now for one side, now for another, always changing and true only to your nature. No one this side of Heaven can stand before you, and yet everyone must. I would fight you now despite that, but I know, whether the struggle was long or short, in the end I could not win. For the love I bear my lady, I dare not challenge you."

The Black Knight nodded to him. There might have been a flicker of a smile on the creature's face, but Madoc tried not to think of that. He moved on to the last pavilion, and his heart was very heavy. He

had already met two opponents of unbeatable prowess, and only one chance remained. Madoc waited until the tent flap opened, and he greeted the Red Knight.

The Red Knight appeared, if anything, even more formidable than the first two. His hair and beard were red as flame. His eyes were red as an enraged boar's. As for his armor, it was the red of new blood and his crest was a pair of ox horns.

Madoc smiled.

"I know you, my lord," he said. "My people say you fight for England; such English folk as I've met swear the opposite. In truth, like your brothers-in-arms you merely serve your own nature, and your will would be to turn all against all if you could. None deny that you are a fell and terrible opponent, but even the humblest knight will not name you his better. I choose you, my lord, and for the love I bear my lady I will defeat you if I can."

The Red Knight's smile only reached his teeth; his tone was mocking. "Brave words. I shall delight in seeing you choke on them."

The squire appeared leading the Red Knight's horse; a giant sorrel caparisoned in scarlet. The Red Knight mounted, took his lance, and trotted to the far side of the field. Madoc mounted his own horse, and the squire brought him a lance of the same sort as the Red Knight now held.

"Are you familiar with this style of combat, my lord?" he asked.

"It's a silly English foppery," Madoc said, "but I am somewhat familiar with it."

That was also somewhat of an understatement. During his long service to Lhwellyn, Madoc had seen many a tournament in those times when Edward and his Prince were at peace, and fought in more than a few. It wasn't his chosen style of combat, but Madoc knew more than the basics. He also knew that, as the challenged, the Red Knight had choice of weapons. He hoped his opponent was equally versed in the other rules of combat.

Not that adherence to rules is in his nature.

The White Knight, acting as marischal, gave the signal. The Red Knight and Madoc touched spurs to flanks and their mounts shot forward. Madoc timed the lowering of his lance perfectly, as did the Red Knight. Both lances struck shield. Madoc's lance shattered. The Red Knight's did not. The only thing that prevented Madoc from being thrown from his horse like a rag doll was the high cantle on his saddle. As it was, the lance point, slipping off Madoc's turned shield, struck his lance arm a glancing blow that made it go numb.

The Red Knight rose in his stirrups and shouted across the field. "Another pass, my lord?"

"As you will," replied Madoc grimly. He dropped the useless haft and flexed his fingers. He knew he was bleeding, but the wound seemed minor; everything was still working and in a few moments some feeling returned to his arm. Pain, mostly, but that was better than what might have happened.

Madoc noticed the squire running across the field, bringing him a new lance, and he waited. Madoc also noticed something else. Somewhere amid the scarlet drappings on the Red Knight's horse, Madoc saw something out of place — a flash of white among the scarlet, something hanging down beside the saddle. It took him a moment to figure out what it was.

The girth is loose.

Madoc realized it must have loosened during the impact, and was now practically free. All he had to do was keep silent, and there was little chance that he would fail to unhorse the Red Knight on the next pass whether his lance shattered or not. "Sir Knight," he shouted, "see to your saddle girth before we meet again."

He didn't know why he had warned the Red Knight. It wasn't arrogance; Madoc knew his own strength but now he knew his opponent's as well, and he understood there was a very good chance he would lose this fight. It wasn't the knightly code, either, since Madoc was not a knight and, though his Prince had been made such and had the right to grant it to Madoc, Madoc had seen enough of knightly behavior to decline the honor more than once. Still, under the English rules he was indeed required to do as he had done; not warning the Red Knight would be like breaking his word, and that he would not do.

The Red Knight didn't seem very grateful for the warning. In truth he seemed more irritated than anything. He finally signaled and the here-again-gone-again squire was there once more, running up to secure the Red Knight's saddle girth and running off into nothing again.

"You needn't try to impress me with your chivalry," the Red Knight shouted, "for I know you are no gentleman."

The insult meant nothing to Madoc, who knew it as simple truth. "No," he said. "I am a Welshman."

On the signal they spurred forward, lance to lance and shield to shield, and this time both lances shattered fairly. Although he could not say why, Madoc felt like a fox that had only narrowly avoided a snare.

"Enough of lances," said the Red Knight. "Swords!"

Madoc smiled. "As you will, and gladly!"

Madoc drew his blade and spurred to meet his opponent. This was fighting as he knew it best; horse to horse and sword to sword. He gave as good as he got for several exchanges. The Red Knight's blows echoed like thunder on Madoc's shield, but always Madoc managed to make sure it was the shield that took the blow and not him. For his own part he kept his sword moving right to left and back again, raining blow after blow that the Red Knight only barely evaded, until Madoc finally landed a very good stroke on his opponent's helm, shearing off one of the horns and staggering the Red Knight in his saddle.

"At you!" Madoc shouted as his sword came down again. The sword broke.

Madoc heard it first; the false ring of false steel, weak and dull. Then the blade snapped at the hilt and went spinning away.

Madoc heard the White Knight's cry of "Hold!" but, it seemed, the Red Knight did not. He struck several blows before he deigned to notice that Madoc was unarmed, and Madoc had not evaded all of them. He gave Madoc a mocking salute and drew back.

He bled at arm and thigh, and his breath was ragged. He was grateful for the respite, for all that, at that moment, he was certain his rest was simply delaying the inevitable.

Whatever I use, he will cause to break. How can I defeat him?

His forearm was bleeding just a little bit worse than his leg. He looked about for some scrap of cloth to tend it with, then remembered Gwynfyr's veil. Reluctantly, he untied it from his upper arm and considered how best to staunch the blood.

The Red Knight, who was watching him all this time, suddenly leaned forward. "What is that?"

"My lady's veil," Madoc replied. "I suppose you English call them, what, favors? Yes, that is it. Why, do you carry none? Is there no one worthy to inspire the strength of your arm?"

The Red Knight shrugged. "I alone am worthy of the strength of my arm. I fight for myself, and because it suits me to do so, as you so eloquently pointed out at your challenge. Have you no grand words now?"

Madoc smiled. It was all he could do to keep from laughing out loud with relief and, for once, it did not feel like madness. "I might at that, Sir Knight. Let us find out."

Madoc had only one weapon left to him, his saddle ax. He took it then and very carefully wrapped Gwynfyr's veil around the haft from grip to head and sealed the end by wrapping it about his right hand.

"You fight well," the Red Knight said, "but I do believe I have your measure now. Be prepared for death."

"Always," Madoc said, "but not this time."

"Brave words," repeated the Red Knight. "Useless."

"The truth," said Madoc, "and never that." He held up his ax. "Look well. This veil is not mine; it belongs to my lady. It stands for her as you stand for yourself. It is the symbol of my lady's love for me, and By Our Lady of Grace it will prove beyond your power to break!"

Neither waited for the signal. Madoc and the Red Knight charged at each other, and Madoc's shout was pure joy. "Know that it is I who have your measure, Sir Knight, and as I am no gen-

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*When your past shifts behind you like grains of desert sand,
how can you ever find your way back to the truth?*

KALEIDOSCOPE

BY KATE DANIEL

Illustration by Janet Aulisio

LIGHT SIFTS THROUGH THE BROKEN BITS OF PLASTIC AND GLASS AND METAL. Twist, and the pattern falls apart, forming a new one. See how it looks like a snowflake? No two snowflakes are alike, did you know that? Never two the same. Snowflakes from the sky, snowflake patterns in the magic tube, no two alike.

The magic of a kaleidoscope blocks the kaleidoscope of the hospital around her. Hospitals are full of fragments, life and death in pieces, unexplained requests over the intercom, urgencies with no beginning or end

visible to people trapped in the sterile waiting rooms. The little boy sitting next to her is a stranger, but not as strange as the figure of her own mother. That's not Mother sitting there, clenching a soggy Kleenex, chewing the lipstick off her bottom lip. It can't be. If that's Mother, then the wasted man in the hospital bed was Dad. His face against a harsh white pillow was too haggard, unfamiliar.

Better not to remember that. Much better to share a toy with a child. The little boy sits apart from his own fragments of family; a father who exchanges a few worried words with Mother, a slightly older brother. Pieces of two unrelated families, lives jumbled together forever by whatever patterns led each to this conjunction. Memories of the face against the pillow will always be mixed with this young stranger's face smudged with forgotten tears, lost in the wonder of a cheap cardboard-and-plastic kaleidoscope bought on impulse at the hospital gift shop.

Around them, the patterns of the hospital shift and turn. Nurses pass, orderlies, doctors, all moving with a speed that says Purpose, but the purpose is never explained. Mother talks at the boy's father, who talks at Mother. Neither listens; the comfort is in the speaking.

The brother begins to whine, wanting TV, wanting Nintendo, wanting the attention his father, busy talking at, can't supply now. She ignores them, ignores the changing patterns of the hospital, and plays with the little boy, showing him infinity trapped inside a cardboard tube.

But the patterns coalesce around a doctor who does not hurry by, a doctor in a blue hospital smock, mask pushed down and hanging loose around his neck. He confronts Mother, his face grave.

"I'm sorry," he says. "I'm sorry."

And all the patterns fall apart as she realizes her father is dead.

NOTHING IN THE HOUSE HAD CHANGED, BUT EVERYTHING looked different. Smaller, cramped, dingy somehow. Partly it was because of the years since I'd last seen it. Who was it said you can't go home again? I hadn't tried in a long time.

Mostly it had been the words. Cirrhosis. Dead. Daddy. Those three words didn't belong together, couldn't be together. But they were. Quick and easy, as such things went. So the doctor said, and he saw enough to know, but it hadn't been easy. Hell was a better word. The



whole three weeks are a frozen slice of Hell in my memory, beginning with the phone call from Mother.

I had laughed, of course. "Cirrhosis? That's what drunks get."

"Yes." Impossibly, that was all she said. "Yes."

It came out in pieces, memories that shifted position as I watched. The laughter and good humor, the dozens of friends, the stops at the club, an endless Club of veterans' associations filled with men all around the same age. Some pieces that had never fit fell into place at last. Mother's tears late at night, endless worries about money even before Daddy lost his job. But most of the pieces slipped around, refusing to remain a part of any pattern. I remembered my childhood, but did I know what had happened?

Mother came in. "Everyone will be here soon. If it's not too much trouble, I could use some help in the kitchen." There was sarcasm in the voice, an old pattern. "People expect to be fed after funerals."

I bit back an equally sarcastic response. Too much alike. That was what Daddy always said about us. Instead, I followed her to the kitchen and started a pot of coffee. There wasn't much else to do; cousins and aunts had supplied food, trays, dishes. Aunt Myrtle was already there, fussing at Mother to go lie down, heaven's sake, Mary, it's not like you haven't got enough to worry about. Another pattern, this one, midwestern funerals. As many covered dishes as a church supper. Myrtle would have been shocked if Mother had actually gone to lie down, unable to comprehend if Mother had told everyone to go home and leave her alone. Funerals were for the family, and the widow was the star of the show. Daughters who trekked off to the wilds of New Mexico didn't fit.

I had survived desert summers. You endure, and finally it passes. I had survived Daddy's illness, the funeral and the relatives. But summer leaves behind desert fall and winter, a pattern that repeats with little change. This had been more like a sandstorm, when the world is rearranged between one day and the next. Familiar landmarks were changed or gone, scoured away by the blowing sand.

Mechanically I rinsed a cup left sitting on top of the television. There was nothing else to do; the aunts and cousins had cleaned ruthlessly, not even leaving pans to soak in the sink. Mother was sitting at the kitchen table, the only other dirty cup in the house in front of her full of untasted coffee.

"Mom? You okay?" Stupid, the questions people ask at times like this, but there was a reason for it. I wanted one of her cutting replies, a hint of temper, the polished daytime surface that had always been Mother, remote from the night-sound of tears. I had fought Mother for years; I wanted that pattern to still be the same.

"I don't know. Guess I'll have to be. It's not the first time I've had to manage." And I watched, appalled, as tears slid down her cheeks and the private night-sound of her crying filled a spotless kitchen. She never cried in front of me.

I tried to comfort her, awkward with the role-reversal. But when she started to talk about Daddy, I fled. The man she was so bitter about was no one I had ever known. Every incident was twisted by the stranger-husband my mother remembered instead of the father I thought I knew.

Overnight company was bedded down, asleep in the basement family room on cots and couches transformed into temporary beds less comfortable than the floor. When I was young, my bedroom had served as guest room and every visitor had displaced me to the basement. Now I was almost a guest myself, my room almost mine once more. Mother's sewing cabinet sat in one corner next to my old bookshelf, a set of extra folding chairs leaned against the wall below a cheap print of Manet's - that I'd picked up on a class field trip to the Art Institute. My possessions and Mother's had mingled in the 10 years since I'd left home. But some of my childhood remained. The dust ruffles on the bed, faded now but still the pattern I had chosen. Annie, my favorite doll, who had started as a bride but had become so many other things, lacy white gown long lost to rats. The bright primary colors on a set of folk and fairy tales for children.

And my kaleidoscope. I crossed to the bookshelf, built years before by my father. Daddy wasn't a carpenter; the wobble in the

uneven legs had been built in. The kaleidoscope lay on top as it had always done, bright brass gathering any stray light beams in the room and hinting at magic visible within. I picked it up.

PIECES OF SILVER FOIL. CLEAR STONES IN MANY COLORS. A GOLD PIN, a tiny key, a red sequin. A spiral like a flattened bit of corkscrew. The kaleidoscope is old, a substantial brass tube like an old-fashioned spy glass, suitable for a pirate in an Errol Flynn movie. When she was a little girl, she had searched through it many times for an island of buried treasure, from the crow's-nest of the elm tree.

Hold it to the light and look down the barrel. The mirrors inside, good ones instead of the cheap metal reflectors of dime-store toys, multiply jewels and silver and gold, the bits of colored glass and metal foil, into a pattern of riches. The treasure wasn't buried; it was in her hands the whole time. The first time Mother read the tale of Aladdin to her, she recognized the cave. She'd seen it many times, through the tube.

The memory-pictures overlay the gleam of glass jewels. Daddy laughing, picnics at the lake, backyard barbecues. Now someone has twisted the tube, and other pieces are falling in front of them, almost forgotten pieces, unnoticed ones....

I REMEMBERED WHEN DADDY GAVE ME THE KALEIDOSCOPE. I'd always loved the little toy ones. Remembering them, I'd bought one and given it to the little boy in the hospital waiting room. Sometimes I had tried to show the patterns to Mom and Dad, but the little plastic pieces always shifted when I passed the tube to them, no matter how careful I was. I don't know where Dad found this one. It was old, possibly an antique, not a child's toy. But it had been mine, from my ninth birthday on. My birthday party was over, cake and ice cream eaten, and I was getting ready for bed when he finally came home. "Here," he said. "I didn't forget." And he had looked at Mother.

I hadn't paid any attention to that look at the time; I'd been too pleased with the polished old brass tube, the bits of colored glass and metal that I was sure were jewels and which were certainly classier than the plastic fragments found in most kaleidoscopes. But it came back to me now, a look of defiance and triumph and shame, all mixed. He'd promised to be home for the party, of course, but he'd had to work late that night.

Work late. How many times had I heard that?

"Daddy's working late tonight."

"He called and said we'd better go on, he has to work late."

"Sorry I missed the concert, pumpkin, I had to work late. Bet you were terrific."

I wondered if the magic were still there. I had always been able to see anything I wanted to through the kaleidoscope, if I tried hard enough. The riches of Aladdin's cave faded and I would see the Sugarplum Fairy or the Snow Queen. Those were the first, triggered by the snowflake patterns caught within the tube. Later I'd been a pirate, looking for treasure through my spyglass. It had been years since I'd remembered that, the way I could see anything if I tried. Things shifted always, Sugarplum's ice crown becoming spun sugar, tropical islands turning into coral atolls into jungle-covered mainland, Dorothy melting into Ozma while Toto and the Lion changed places. But if I wanted to see the Emerald City through my magic spyglass, the glass stones became green gems, framing a picture of Ozma's home town.

I had an overactive imagination, I was told, almost as if it were a medical condition like an overactive thyroid. In high school I'd used it less, only looking at the pretty patterns occasionally, and I'd labeled the games I'd played as just that, games made up by an over-imaginative child.

I wasn't a child any more. But I wanted to see through the kaleidoscope now more than I ever had as a little girl. Being in my old room had brought a rush of memories. What I'd seen hadn't just been invented by a kid who read too much. I'd seen coconut palms fringing a white sand beach around a turquoise lagoon, a scene recognized years later in a travel magazine. We never had such magazines in the

I wondered if the magic were still there. I had always been able to see anything I wanted to through the kaleidoscope, if I tried hard enough.

house. A strange mechanical man talked with the Wizard; I didn't discover Tik-Tok until several years later. I hadn't made it all up.

Want had shown things in the kaleidoscope to a child; need could now show things to the adult me. And if I could see a world, maybe it could be real. I'd always felt one step would put me on that island, but I'd never had the nerve to take it.

First I had to remember how it worked. If memories can be festooned with cobwebs, these were. I hadn't thought back to grade school in years. And my solitary games, solitary because no one else wanted to play weird stuff like pirates instead of Barbies, had been something done rather than thought about. But the way it came back to me, the way memories do, in pieces. I had to put new items in the kaleidoscope. Not physically, not by opening it up, but by picturing pieces of what I wanted to see. Tropics, palm trees, sailing ships, treasure chests. The Emerald City, Dorothy, the Scarecrow. Snowflakes, a nutcracker, the Land of the Sweets, fairyland. The pictures the kaleidoscope had shown me were detailed beyond a child's imagination, but I had to supply some of the pieces myself.

So, what pieces could I furnish now? I sat with the brass tube in my lap, imagining the pieces of my childhood, all my memories, a family album of mental snap-shots of happy days, solid family, loving parents. I wanted my past back, wanted it to be what I remembered, the way I remembered. In my memory of the past, Daddy didn't have a drinking problem. If I could get that memory back and make it reality, Daddy wouldn't be dead of cirrhosis and Mother wouldn't be a bitter widow facing a mountain of debts. It was worth a try.

When I had all the pieces I could think of in place, I picked up the kaleidoscope and looked through it.

GENTLE SPLASHES, WAVES AGAINST THE SIDE OF A ROWBOAT. THE LAKE is small, and only a light breeze ruffles its surface, occasionally stiffening to make the choppy waves dance. A deep blue sky offers no clouds to protect against a midsummer sun, reflecting itself in bright stars against the water's surface. The oars dip, shedding bright diamond drops as they break surface then dip again. The boat moves, spinning lazily on its axis in response to the uneven strokes of the oars.

The man wielding the oars sweats and swears, and the right one slips from his grasp. He swears again and reaches for it as it floats away. The maneuver sets the small boat rocking, water slopping over the side as the other two occupants sit frozen, waiting for the boat to capsize.

She is afraid to move, afraid to upset the boat, afraid to ask for the oar. She has already asked her father once to let her row, and her ears are pink at the memory of his profane response. The picnic has gone on and on, endless beers, and her escape attempt with her friend, renting a rowboat to flee the arguments on shore, had been ruined when he announced he would teach them how to row a boat. She is afraid to look at her friend, afraid of the pity and scorn she knows is on the other girl's face. The diamond-sparkle of sun on waves makes her eyes water, half-blinding her, and she blinks back tears.

Luck finally moves the boat toward shore, and the girls stumble onto the pier. They move away quickly, as the owner of the rental boats starts to yell about the missing oar. There is no scorn on her friend's face, just round, round eyes.

"Wow," she says. "Your family sure knows how to have fun."

THE KALEIDOSCOPE BOUNCED AS IT HIT THE CARPET. CARPETING WAS A new touch; when this had been my bedroom, the floors had been bare except for a rag rug Susie had made for me. She'd made it the same summer as the picnic at the lake, the summer we both turned 15.

But the memories the kaleidoscope had shown were *wrong*, twisted out of shape somehow. I remembered that picnic very well. Sure, Daddy drank a lot of beer, he usually did — the whole hell of what Mother had told me came back. I pushed it away. That didn't change what had happened at the lake. Susie and I had gone out in the rowboat with Daddy, but we were the ones who made it go in circles. We'd never rowed before, and we couldn't keep our strokes equal. Daddy laughed so hard he almost fell overboard. There was no anger, no swearing, no fear. Susie had said our family had fun but she had meant it, without the sarcasm of the false-memory Susie. Maybe he had been drunk — again Mother's words hit me, all the times he had been unable to drive, the "naps" on the couch that were more than sleep. Still, the picnic hadn't been like that.

I'd done something wrong, that was all, provided the wrong pieces for the kaleidoscope. Daddy hadn't been angry. Mother's anger at him was a deep, cold thing, but it had been carefully hidden for years. All I'd ever seen was the anger she directed at me, which had finally driven me from home. But there was Tik-Tok — maybe her anger had gotten into the picture the way Tik-Tok had gotten into my Oz even though I hadn't read that book. Her unseen rage could have been twisted into the fury I'd felt in the kaleidoscope-lake from my father. Anger had been present, even if I hadn't seen it. The pattern contained pieces I couldn't remember.

But maybe I could take pieces away. I concentrated, mentally removing the beer, the anger, everything but the lake and the rowboat and the picnic and Susie. And Daddy.

THERE IS NO BREEZE, NO STIR OF AIR ABOVE THE WATER. HEAT and humidity settle like a wet sponge, making breathing difficult. The two girls pull at the oars, sweat dripping into their eyes, as the man sitting at the end of the boat looks toward shore. He moves his head to do so, as the boat rotates, spinning slowly in place in the middle of the lake.

Heat and stillness muffle sound and life as the girls struggle, trying to equalize their strokes. At last the man reaches for the oars himself. "We've wasted enough time out here. I have to get back to work." With a few strokes, he sends the boat across the water to the pier. The woman on the shore has already packed up the picnic basket. He waits, glancing at his watch impatiently, as the girls return the oars to the rental stand and grab their belongings. He's not sure how they talked him into this. Picnics are a waste of time.

SOMETHING HAD TWISTED THE PATTERN AGAIN, MAKING DADDY A workaholic instead of alcoholic. Not much improvement if that glimpse was accurate. He had always been a hard worker — I thought back to all the times he'd worked late. Some of those times probably *had* been work. The easy, pop-psych terms came to mind: compulsive, addictive personality. Possibly they were all true. But that version of the past hadn't been.

I kept trying all that night, seeing the picnic again and again, always wrong, always a twisted pattern. In one, my mother was the drinker. That one scared me so badly I almost gave up. But I went

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IN THE LAND OF THE BEARS

LONG AGO, BEARS WERE PEOPLE. My mother's father told me this one hazy mid-summer Oklahoma day, toward the end of the light, when the sky was just shading toward a creamy violet-gray. The air was filled with the sharp green scent of sun-heated ivy and sumac and oak. Midges swarmed around our faces and we had to keep brushing them away. I was 10 as we knelt to run our fingers over a crumbling footprint in dried mud that resembled the outline of a human hand.

Granpa's brown-black eyes, recessed within a lifetime of sun-wrinkles, went reflective as a lake just before a storm. A powerful stillness welled up between us and I saw my eyes mirrored in his, their doubled image just as walnut-dark. Just as Cherokee and lost too, though I didn't know it then.

I brushed the red clay dirt off my hands. When Mother dropped me off with my grandparents for the summer, her mouth had been tight. She'd looked at me hard, then cautioned me to remain civilized enough for human company, or she would not let me come again to this beloved farm tucked up in the hills, a serious threat because I had never

BY K.D. WENTWORTH
Illustration by David Martin



DAVID MARTIN
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been allowed to visit Gramma and Granpa before. They always made the trip from the Cookson Hills down into Tulsa in their creaking Ford truck, stayed in our spare bedroom for a week, then drove back home alone. At some point in each visit, lying in bed at night, I would hear Granpa and my mother argue, although I never knew why. The next morning, the atmosphere around the breakfast table would taste sharp as lemons. He and Gramma would say good-bye, their dark eyes bleak, and I wouldn't see them again for months.

I sighed and laid a hand on Granpa's arm. His bronze skin was tanned as leather and the farm-bred muscles were like bands of steel beneath. "If bears were people before, why did they change?"

He gazed off into the maze of green-swathed trees that blanketed the rocky, rolling hillsides. "Andi, why would *Yanu* want to be a person anymore in this soulless world of machines and money and greed?" He stared down at his clenched hands. "City folks don't know about the heartbeat of our mother the earth, or the song of the wind through the trees, or how it must feel to have the land know your name." His sun-seamed face was haggard with grief and his voice cracked. "We had that in the old time, before they tore us off our land. I would give anything to hear it just once before I die."

I thought of Tulsa, where my mother and father and I lived amid thrumming life, the gray asphalt streets that were always bright, no matter the time of day or night, the eternal restless energy of passing cars and shoppers. "City folks seem fine anyway, Granpa. I guess they don't miss those things."

He turned my chin to one side, studying me as though I bore the face of a stranger. "Better to be a bear," he said finally. "Better to wander the hills fierce and free, take what you need and leave the rest unspoiled, stalk this land proud as the trees and the sun and the stars and pay mind to no man." The wrinkles in his face were carved deep as the ancient folds of the hills around us and I felt his sadness break over me like a great wave.

He would not tell me what was wrong that summer. It hung over us, acrid and bitter like smoke over the blackened stubs of a burned forest. Granpa would sit for hours staring across the hazy blue hills, and did less and less each day in the way of chopping wood, or plowing, or baling hay. Something was gnawing the center out of his heart and he couldn't, or wouldn't, say what it was. Standing there beside the footprint, I took his callused hand between mine and wished Granpa could be a bear, if that would bring life back to his face and make him happy again.

That night, I lay in the hickory bedstead he had made for my mother when she was a child. The Cherokee syllables carved in the headboard spelled out "hope" and "peace" and "love." I ran my fingers over each shape in the darkness as the crickets sang, and imagined my mother as a little girl, feeling these words behind her head every night as she lay down to sleep.

The cooling evening air stole across the window sill, laden with invigorating night scents and the shattering screech of owls on the hunt. The forest breathed and I felt my own breath fall into its steady rhythm, until it seemed oaks and pecan trees and sycamores rooted in my skin, granite replaced my bones, and sweet, clear springs cascaded down my neck and shoulders.

I dreamed then of strange bears, twice as large as any I'd ever seen, dark green as leaves and marked with lighter striations. They circled me, their cool flesh hard as stone, then danced under the bemused light of the diamond stars descended so low they darted above us like fireflies. I danced too then under strange soaring trees formed from smooth opaque stone. Wherever I looked, everything was the same wondrous green as the bears, and I felt equally as green, emerald and jade and olive and lime and mint and teal, every shade of the earth that contains at its heart a droplet of life. Granpa watched us from behind the trees, his dark eyes filled with pain. I reached out to him, but he shook his head and walked away, following a trail I could not make out.

He left the cabin sometime the next morning before Gramma and I woke. Gramma stood on the porch in her nightshift and stared into the trees, her mouth pinched with worry. "I thought this might be coming," she said. "That man is sick in his soul." I wanted to tell her about my dream, about the green and the bears and the dancing stars, but there were no words for such things in my head. "Can I go look for him?" I asked.

She stroked my hair with trembling hands.

"We'll both look." We dressed and then set out on a winding deer trail that led to one of Granpa's favorite lookout spots, a ledge above a narrow cleft valley. Fresh boot tracks showed up from time to time as we walked, clearly marked in bare patches of the moist red earth. "He wants to be a bear," I told Gramma, my fingers twined through the reassuring warmth of hers. "He says bears were people once, but now they're happier just being bears."

"I swear!" Gramma shook her head and her gray braids slipped back over her shoulders. "Sometimes I think your granpa's out and out simple. He always gets that story backward."

We walked on, brushing against the spiny branches of scrub oak, skirting clumps of myrtle and blackberry. "The people who became *Yanu*, the bear, were just plain lazy. They didn't want to work to hunt and grow their food any more, so they fasted seven days until their human nature was purged from their bodies. Then they grew fur and forever after roamed the woods, eating their fill without having to toil, until it was time to sleep the hard cold months of winter away." Her mouth tightened. "For a life of ease, they gave up human joy and love and laughter, not much of a trade, to my way of thinking."

I thought about that as a red-tailed hawk wheeled above the trees, scouting its supper.

"Granpa says this world is a terrible place to live – that it has no soul."

"That's because your granpa's granpa walked the Trail of Tears." Gramma's voice was as soft as my bare feet whispering through the grass. "Many years ago, gold was discovered on our land in the east and the Cherokee people were forced to leave their homes in the silvery pale of winter with very little to eat and only the clothes on

"BETTER TO WANDER THE HILLS FIERCE AND FREE, TAKE
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PROUD AS THE TREES AND THE SUN AND THE STARS AND PAY MIND
TO NO MAN." THE WRINKLES IN HIS FACE WERE CARVED DEEP
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their backs. Soldiers herded them all the way from Georgia to Indian Territory on foot, right across the Smokey Mountains. Over four thousand people died that journey, some from starvation and disease and exhaustion, but even more I think from heartbreak. They had to bury them in shallow graves without ceremonies of any sort to ease their way into the Night Country. Your own great-great-granpa started out that winter with his grandparents, mother and father, and six brothers and sisters. When he finally set foot here in Indian Territory, he was the only one of his family still drawing breath in this Middle World. All the rest were left behind along the trail, buried under the snow."

The track was growing fainter as we walked and the air thickened with the heat of midday. I felt my cotton shirt sticking to my back between my shoulder blades. The aromatic fragrance of leaves bruised underfoot rose through the dappled shade and I could hear a creek keeping pace with us somewhere just out of sight.

Gramma sighed. "He told the tales of those terrible days to his son, who then told them to his son, who became your granpa. Once heard, these sorrowful things can never be forgotten and I should not even be telling you this much. Such stories can eat into a person's spirit so that he sees only the meanness in the world, not the fine way it shines on a clear fall morning, or the soft warm way it feels when you hold a new baby who is kin to you close to your heart. I'm afraid your granpa has been filled up to the ears with those stories since he was knee-high. That's why your mamma said no way was he ever to tell those awful things to you. She wouldn't agree to let you stay with us until he finally promised."

The trees were misty, as though the morning haze had not yet burned off, though it was well into midday. And they had a peculiar gleam, as though they had gone hard and shiny, no longer composed of bark and leaf, but something more enduring, meant for the ages. I touched one as we passed and found it cool and smooth as polished brass, the color a lustrous dark green streaked with lighter bands.

Gramma stopped, her face frightened. "We shouldn't have come this far."

"Gramma," I whispered, "there were trees like this in my dream." She grasped me by the shoulders and held my gaze with her own. "And, you're sure? You dreamed of this place?"

I swallowed hard. My heart was racing. "Yes'm."

"And was Granpa here?"

I nodded. "And bears, too, big ones, all green and shiny, just like the trees. Granpa watched while they danced with me, but then he was sad and went away."

She touched a trunk in the shape of a white oak. Her eyes grew round. "It's malachite," she said. "Like the necklace Granpa gave me on our wedding day for good luck." She pulled the necklace out from under her blouse and fingered the green stones inset with silver, looking more afraid than I'd ever seen her. "I've been very foolish, Andi. I wouldn't have followed Granpa, if I'd had any notion this was where he was headed. We have to go back while we still can."

"But where are we, Gramma?" I smoothed my hand over the malachite trunk. Every knot and scale of bark was faithfully reproduced in the wonderfully cool green mineral. It felt strange to touch it, like I was stepping off into a hole, like there were no edges to my life anymore.

She grabbed my hand. "Never you mind."

"But what about Granpa?" I asked, but she pulled me around and didn't even look at me. I had no choice but to follow her back over the deer track the way we had come, down through hollows and up over a forested ridge, but it was different now. Everything was made of malachite, from the swaying fronds of the willows to the bees and rabbits we flushed. They studied us with knowing green eyes. The sun beat down upon our unprotected heads, no longer yellow, but golden green, brighter and more beautiful than a hundred regular suns.

We broke out into a clearing and saw a green bear, fearsome and

wise-looking, as though it had lived a thousand years already and was fixing to start on another span just as long. It gazed into Gramma's eyes and she squeezed my hand so hard that I felt tears well up.

"Let us go, *Yanu*," she said clearly. "If this is what Hiram wants, I would gladly stay too, but this child is not old enough to make such a choice."

The bear stalked forward, massive as a mountain, muscles playing beneath its smooth green hide. Its dark-green nose twitched as it took in her scent, then mine. I could smell it too, a minty, leafy, sap-like musk that brought to mind spring and growth and new beginnings. It exhaled into my face and I felt my whole body tingle.

"*Bide with us, Blue Fern Woman of the Long Hair Clan*," it said in a voice that rumbled with the power of a waterfall and snapped with lightning. "*We have seen how you have always kept the rituals in your heart. All your relatives are here, the winged, the four-legged, the leafed. There is always plenty to eat and no one acts without respect or understanding.*"

Gramma trembled as she released my hand and stepped forward. "We were not made for this world, *Yanu*. If Andi and I stay too long, we will no longer be flesh, and I promised my daughter that her child would be safe with us. She will return for her seven days from now, so I have to take her back."

The bear sighed, then sat back on its massive haunches and folded its wickedly clawed paws across its chest. Movement flickered in the malachite bushes behind it, then I saw my granpa, standing to the bear's right. I tugged at Gramma's sleeve.

She sagged. "Hiram," she said, her voice thready, as though she couldn't get her breath.

"I answer to only my true-name here," Granpa said. "Anything else would be a lie, and no lies can be spoken in this place." Gramma looked away. "He-is-Wandering, then," she said. "Come home, and we'll talk about this. We can work it out."

"I can't breathe there any more." Granpa didn't move so much as an eyelash. "Our life has become a lie."

"To refrain from telling is not a lie!" she cried. "We talked it over and you agreed."

"I was wrong," he said. "The truth is all knotted up in my throat, big as a watermelon, and I can't eat or drink or draw a single easy breath. I thought I could do it, if it meant Dana would let Andi come to us at last after all these years, but now I see I can't live like that." The green malachite earth thrummed against the bare soles of my feet, a wild vibrant rhythm that made my heart sing. I heard the wind come up and rush through the malachite trees, sweeter than any sound I'd ever heard, like the ringing of chimes, but so much more wonderful that I thought my heart would burst. It seemed full of words just beyond the edge of comprehension, and I felt — if I could listen long enough, — I would understand all the secrets of the universe.

"*You must go*," said the bear.

Gramma seized my hand again. "Come on, Andi."

"But, Gramma!" I dug in my heels. "What about Granpa?"

"I can't do anything about Granpa right now." Tears streaked her sun-browned face as she pulled me away.

We ran until our chests heaved with the lack of air and a red-hot stitch doubled me up and Gramma had to loop her arm across my back and drag me along, until the only sounds in the entire universe were the agonized rasp of our own labored breathing and the pounding of the blood in our ears, until our legs gave out and we fell on our faces in the springy grass, sobbing for air.

After a while, Gramma blinked up at me, her eyes squinted against the late-afternoon sunlight. Her fingers dug into the red earth. "We — made it," her cracked voice whispered.

I sat up, still too winded to answer.

She leaned against a fair-sized scrub oak. "Andi, you have to promise me that you won't go after our granpa again. He's got to find his own way back to this world, or it won't do any good."

"But —"

"Promise!" I could see the fear flickering through her dark eyes

like summer lightning.

"Yes, Granpa," I whispered hoarsely. "I promise."

The cabin was as still as a church in the coming days. Granma washed and scrubbed and cooked like she expected company, but no one came. Certainly not Granpa. When she wearied of indoor chores, she sat on the porch and wove baskets in the old way out of honeysuckle vine and river cane, one after another, as though her life depended upon it. Her face was a mask of grief set in sun-browned folds and her eyes always seemed to be looking at something I could not see.

At night, she would kindle a fire out under the stars and sprinkle pinches of Granpa's tobacco over it. We would watch as the sweet smell rose with the smoke, swirling up into the sky like a prayer. I wished for the stars to come down and dance again, but they stubbornly stayed where they belonged.

Each night, I dreamed of Granpa, watching us from that strange green country. His eyes were dark green now, with those thin light lines running through them, shining as bright as the stars themselves. He seemed quieter, not happy exactly, but less sad. I always wanted to throw my arms around him, but he never came that close. He stood back in the shining green malachite trees and spoke to me in a sober voice. *"Four thousand, Andi. Babies left behind like so much trash. One in four buried under the snow."*

I dreamed of them too, the abandoned dead beneath great drifts of snow, the shrieking wind, wolves prowling afterward, bloody bones scattered across the alabaster expanse of snow. Sometimes it seemed it was I who had been left behind, frozen and lifeless, entombed in the icy earth. Then I would wake up screaming, Granma's arms wrapped around my shoulders, and the piercing cold of that awful journey threaded through my soul.

"It's not right," Granma murmured against my hair on the fourth night after we had left Granpa among the malachite trees. "I promised your mamma we would never tell you those things, and now they have hold of you too." She pressed my face to her soft bosom and rocked me. I smelled the sweetness of homemade honeysuckle soap in her hair. "It's all in the past, little one, long gone and buried. There's nothing anyone can do for those poor folks now, and your mamma didn't want you burdened with it the way she was."

"Granpa told her those stories?" I lifted my face to her tear-tracked cheeks.

"It seemed proper at the time," she said. "His papa had told him, and his papa before him, so we wouldn't forget what happened, how much the Cherokee lost." She stroked my hair. "That land was more than just dirt, you see. It was sacred, and they found it as terrible to leave behind as it was to abandon their dead. That land was their mother and father. It held their souls and knew their names."

I sat up in the sheltering circle of her arms. "But this is our land now."

"It's not the same, Redbird," she said, using the true-name she and Granpa had given me at birth. "It takes a very long time for a land to know us in that sacred way. Even after four generations, we've barely begun here. Sometimes, in the first seconds of dawn, I have a glimmer of what it might have been like, a moment of beauty, or a shred of song, but it's so faint."

I leaned against her and closed my eyes, wondering what it would be like to walk in a place that knew my name.

The bronzed, end-of-summer days skittered past like water spiders over a pond, barely touching us. Some nights I would still dream of the terrible journey out of the east into Indian Territory, but on others, I dreamed of a beautiful raven-haired woman named *Selu*, who came to me, her arms filled with golden ears of corn, and of a strangely clever rabbit, totally

unlike the meek creatures of my experience, who could trick any living thing, no matter how large or small, and of an immense man with thews like tree trunks striding across sprawling blue-ridged mountains, his hair and eyes full of thunder. And always, somewhere in the background, there were the bears, green and wise and full of secrets, dancing to a rhythm that made my heart sing.

Sometimes I heard Granma weeping at night when she thought I was asleep. Although she had brought me back to keep her promise to my mother, she ached for Granpa. When I left, she would cast aside her human life to be with him, and then they would abide in that strange green mineral land. I would never see either of them again. It would be just as wrenching as all those years ago when the soldiers had torn apart our ancestors' families and stolen their land. I would be alone, the only Cherokee in my family, for my father was Irish-American and I saw now that my mother had determined to live in the white world and, by not remembering the pain of the past, not to share it.

I lay in bed on the last night before my parents would drive out from Tulsa to pick me up, and ran my fingers over the Cherokee syllables Granpa had carved into the headboard. The symbols felt familiar now — the swirl of "peace," the sweeping lines of "love," the curve of "hope." I had never thought much about what it meant to be Cherokee before I came here. I had Cherokee features and coloring, as did some others in my school, but it had meant no more to me than being blonde or freckled meant to my friends. We lived the same middle-class life, rode our bikes, watched television, played with our friends, forgot to do our homework. I thought we were all the same.

But I had never felt so at home, as I did here in the green-swathed hills with my grandparents, so in tune with something beneath the surface of thought, so much — myself. I sensed a part of me I had never known before, a part never recognized and named. It was powerful and quiet, waiting just out of reach, tied up somehow in those old stories. In order to reach it, I had to hear them all, the good and the bad, or this other part of me would just slip away and I would be the same as everyone else, which would make me less, I realized with a jolt, not more.

I slipped out of my mother's old bed and pulled on a shirt and jeans. I could not leave without trying to bring Granpa back. Despite my promise to Granma, I had to find him and try one more time to persuade him to come home.

Granma's room was quiet as I eased out the front door to stand with my head thrown back under the blue-black sky frosted with stars. I breathed in the cool perfume of the night, the grass damp against my bare toes. The trees were black lace against the sky, the crescent moon was just rising. I set out on the deer track as bats swooped above the trees and the leaves rustled in the breeze. An owl screeched in the canopy of foliage overhead and a shiver crawled down my spine. Taken together, the night sounds were like a chorus in another language whose words almost made sense. I strained to understand as I retraced our path through the moon-shadowed trunks and thickets.

My feet were wet with dew, so that I often slipped, and my arms were soon scratched and bleeding from fighting through brambles. The night closed around me like a suffocating black blanket and I felt disoriented. My heart raced as I realized how foolish I was to think I could find my way in the daylight to the place where the bears live, much less in the dark. At last, winded and aching, I sank down beneath the trailing fronds of a gnarled willow and hugged my arms around my scraped knees. This was getting me nowhere. In a few hours, the first pale streaks of dawn would appear and I would lose my grandfather and his stories forever.

My eyelids sagged with exhaustion. I rested my chin on my knees and then I saw the bears in the spaces behind my eyes, shimmering like after images generated by staring too long at the sun. They seemed sad. I was going about this all wrong, their eyes said. To travel to where *Yamu*, the bear, lived was not so much a journey of the body as of the mind. I remembered the cool elegance of malachite against my palms, how its exotic dark-green surface was threaded

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with paler lime, the vibrant singing of that polished green earth against the soles of my feet, then opened my eyes to the clearing surrounded by malachite trees, found myself sitting beneath the shimmering green crescent of a malachite moon.

The air was filled with honeysuckle and mint and night jasmine and a thrumming sense of immense power, as though lightning were only a heartbeat away. A huge malachite bear lumbered forward to regard me with cool eyes of deep emerald. "Welcome, younger sister," it said in a deep growly voice.

My heart pounded. "I want to talk to my grandfather."

The bear turned to gaze over its shoulder and a man emerged from the malachite trees. His skin was green now and covered with short green down, the beginnings of a pelt. With a jolt, I realized he was already more than halfway to being a bear. His eyes were a brilliant bright green that outshone the moon over our heads. "Andi," he said, with a hint of the Granpa I had known. He reached out to me with hands that were more paw than human. Then his eyes narrowed as he spoke my true-name. "Redbird, you must not stay here. This place was not meant for mortal flesh."

"You have to come back." My voice rang out, brittle and childish in that place of singing power. "I need those stories, or I won't ever really be me."

He shook his head. "I promised your mother that I would not tell them any more. She's right; those days are dead and buried, along with everything else from our past. Our sacred connection with the land is gone forever."

I stepped forward and the malachite ground thrummed against my feet like the beating of a vast drum. "I already know enough about what happened that I can't just forget. You have to tell me the rest."

"I can't," he said in a low voice.

Despair washed through me. "All right," I heard myself say, "then I won't go back either. I'll stay here with you and be a bear."

"No!" He darted forward and threw cool stone arms around me. "You have your whole life waiting back there in the Middle World. There are people who love you, roads yet to walk, an entire future!"

"I don't want any of that unless I can be myself," I told him and struggled free. "I can't be this other person who is only half awake." I backed into the center of the clearing, the luminous eyes of the bears upon me. "I have heard the earth sing in my dreams, and the trees laugh, and the whispering of the stones and the stars. I can think bear thoughts as well as you can!"

I began to dance in time with the beat of the earth beneath my bare feet, the same wonderful rhythm I had heard only in my dreams. The bears danced with me, standing upright on two feet, resembling the people they had once been, their great paws folded across their chests, their green ears pinned back with joy. I lost myself in their shimmering emerald eyes and that glorious wild ring of green fur. My boundaries dissolved and for a brief instant we were all one, the bears and the green stars and the grass and I.

In that moment, I felt the inner stillness of the bears and I realized Gramma had been wrong about the meaning of the old

story; *Yanu* was not lazy. Bears had taken this form to leave behind fear and anger and regret, all the day-to-day cares of the world I knew. Now, they possessed peace and oneness, but knew nothing here in this cool other place of love, both that wild emotion humans call passion, and its gentler form, affection. There was no gain without loss, no prize without sacrifice. I could stay among the bears and be as they, peaceful and quiet within, joyful in their own way, but I would still not have myself, the person I sensed I could be.

Breathing heavily, I stopped dancing and stared at the tall form of my grandfather who was kneeling outside the circle, his eyes fixed upon the malachite ground. "This isn't what I want either," I said. "I want what only you and Gramma can give me."

He swallowed hard. "I can't go back," he whispered. "Living in the Middle World hurts. So much has been lost, and even more forgotten. Here there is peace and stillness, rest."

I crossed to him, past the bears who had stopped dancing too, laid my cheek against his green one. "I want to remember it all, the joys and the pain, the deaths and the love."

"Your mother —" he said brokenly.

"She made her choice," I said. "And I guess it was right for her, but I can't live like that. There's something more waiting for me, way down deep where I can't quite reach it."

His arms stole around me, then hugged me fiercely to his chest. His cheek was wet. I buried my face against the green down on his neck. My throat ached. "Come back with me."

We swayed there, hardly breathing, as the wind picked up and the birds chattered, the crickets burst into song and the grass rustled, until finally all the sounds twined into an immense rushing voice. "*He-Is-Home*," it chanted in a rhythm something like a heartbeat, and something more like a song, and the ground vibrated beneath us to its beat. "*He-Is-Home. He-Is-Home.*"

I raised my face and blinked up into the first pale streaks of dawn. The malachite forest was gone, and the bears. We were standing in the verdant woods that bordered the cabin. The song swelled around us, joined by the wispy voices of the leaves and solid boom of the rocks.

"*He-Is-Home*," they said. "*He-Is-Home.*"

Granpa sat back on his heels, wiped a hand across his wet eyes. His skin had returned to its normal leathery tan, with no longer the slightest hint of green. "What?"

A shadowy figure ducked under a willow, then walked out into the pale light of the new day — Gramma, her salt-and-pepper hair wild and loose around her shoulders, her nightgown bramble-torn, her eyes red-rimmed. She wore her wedding malachite necklace over her nightgown and one hand was curled protectively around the gleaming green stones. "It's the land calling your name, old man."

"*He-Is-Home*?" he said and looked around in surprise. "That's not my name."

"Oh, but it is." She pulled the two of us into the honeysuckle sweetness of her arms, where we danced the slow, beguiling dance of the bears. ♡

Walter's Christmas- Night Musik

BY SUSAN J. KROUPA

Illustration by Charles Demorat

*Sometimes, for
Christmas, we get
not only what we
want, but what
we need.*

It was too hot at the music information desk in Disks Galore. The clerks at the front checkstands bumped up the thermostat to compensate for the cold air that swished in with the customers, while at the information desk, at the back of the store, it was sweltering and Walter Gunther was sweating. Sweating and thinking murderous thoughts about the country singer twanging his way through yet another version of "Silent Night" over the public speaker system.

But Walter resisted the urge to pull out his handkerchief and wipe his forehead (and the deeper urge to take one of boxloads of CDs he was supposed to sort and smash it into

the CD player to shut that singer up). As usual, Mr. Mengelson was watching him, waiting for a sign that Walter was too tired to do the job. Too tired, too old, that's what Mengelson thought of him. So Walter, ignoring the burning in his back and the sweat on his forehead, leaned forward with a smile that he hoped didn't look as artificial as it felt and asked the next person in line, "What can I do for you?"

A teenaged boy with a shaved head, wearing gigantic clothes, a single earring and two rings on his lip (really, thought Walter) wanted the Boyz II Men Christmas CD. Walter pointed him in the right direction, and then helped a somber man behind him find the musicals.

Next in line was a well-padded woman about forty, nicely dressed in a brightly patterned Christmas sweater. She had blond hair escaping from a bun, enhancing the frazzled expression that she shared with almost all of the last-minute Christmas-Eve shoppers in the store.

"Can you help me?" she blurted out before Walter even had a chance to put on his smile. "My daughter is a pianist and she heard a piece on the plane, some serenade in D Minor for piano by Schubert, that she's just got to have, but I looked through all the sections of Schubert's music and can't find it at all."

It was the first interesting request all afternoon, the type of question he used to answer half a dozen times a day to half a dozen effusively grateful customers when he had his own



Then he heard lots of footsteps, hard slow ones from the darkened

store, the type he almost never got here at Disks Galore. With a sudden boost of energy and a new, genuine smile, Walter said, "Well, now — let's see what we can find." He attacked the computer with enthusiasm, nosing like a hound for a trace of the elusive serenade, forgetting his tired feet and Mr. Mengelson and the long, lonely night that lay ahead of him.

Almost twenty minutes later, while a recorded voice warned the customers that the store would be closing in five minutes and the blond woman's expression had gone from frazzled to desperate, he found it — and not by just any pianist, either, but a Horowitz recording of the Schubert D Minor Serenade on an obscure disk buried in the middle of the large Horowitz section.

"How can I thank you?" The blond woman looked as if she were about to give him a hug, but contented herself with a murmured "You're wonderful!" as she grabbed the disk and hurried off to the checkout. And Walter sighed with the first real pleasure he'd had all week until he turned and saw Mr. Mengelson glaring at him with an expression that made the snow outside seem balmy.

Mr. Mengelson pointed to the two big boxes of CDs that had arrived in the morning. "Gunter, I told you these had to be put out today."

"Yes, I know. It's been extremely busy —"

"You spent almost half an hour with that last customer. If you can't help them in 5 or 10 minutes, then you just need to say you're sorry, or take their name and number for a later time."

"But she needed it for tomorrow."

"Everyone needs it for tomorrow!" Mr. Mengelson said. "If you had told her we didn't have that CD, she would have bought something else. The point is these have to be out by 8 AM the day after tomorrow for our sale." He looked at his watch. "And I certainly don't have time tonight to stay late because you weren't able to manage your time well."

It took a few seconds during the ensuing silence for Walter to figure out what Mr. Mengelson expected, and another few while Walter reminded himself how much he needed the job. Then he sighed again and said, "I'll stay and put them out if that's what you want."

"It's not that I want it, but that the job should have been done on time," Mr. Mengelson said.

While Mr. Mengelson went to the front of the store to collect the day's receipts for the sale, Walter opened the boxes and began piling the CDs on the counter. Mr. Mengelson-dumb the teenage workers called him behind his back. Walter, though, called him Mr. Mangle-name because that's what he did daily to the composers whose works he sold. How anyone who ordered the wonderful, extensive classical collection that Disks Galore carried could say Da-vor-ak for Dvorak or could make the "z" in Mozart sound like the one in Ozark was beyond Walter. Walter's Austrian grandmother would have rolled over in her grave.

Walter pulled a stack of CDs from the box and sorted them into alphabetical order. There were five different recordings of Mozart's Jupiter Symphony to add to the six or so that were already on the shelf. When he'd owned his store, he'd never been able to afford such an inventory, though he'd memorized the catalogues, and could have found and ordered almost any classical album a customer desired. It was albums back then — CDs didn't come until the last few years, just before Alice got sick.

The lights flicked off, plunging all the store except Walter's area into darkness. Before long, Mr. Mengelson tromped over wearing boots, overcoat, and gloves.

"Everything's locked — just make sure when you leave to pull the door tightly shut. And don't forget to turn off that terminal." As he was walking toward the door, he called over his shoulder, "At least six inches of snow out there! Merry Christmas!"

The words echoed through the store. Merry Christmas indeed, thought Walter. He'd probably lose his job as soon as the holiday rush was over, and then what was he going to do with the endless stretch of days and bills that loomed ahead of him like a prison sentence? The insurance he and Alice had carried had turned out not to be very good, and selling the store had paid only about two-thirds of his wife's medical bills. It seemed as if every day a new one came, and he, who had for a lifetime prided himself on paying his bills the day he received them, now stacked them on his desk and thought that this was how cancer killed the survivors as well as the victims. And thought again that it all would have been worth it — the debt, the humiliation, even Disks Galore — if Alice had survived.

The truth was, although he resented being forced to work late on Christmas Eve, the longer he spent at Disks Galore, the less time he had to spend at home where Alice's absence sighed from every corner.

Walter shelved the disks he'd sorted and was back at the desk reaching for another handful when he thought he heard something. Footsteps? He froze, straining, but heard nothing except the beating of his own heart. Really, he thought, he was getting old.

But then he heard them again — lots of footsteps, hard slow ones and lighter quick ones coming from the darkened part of the store. Walter felt a wash of fear run over him — maybe Mr. Mengelson had left a door unlocked. There had been gangs in the area lately. Walter had no illusions about what would happen if a gang intent on some last minute Christmas cheer caught him still in the store.

He ducked down behind the desk, thinking that it was probably too late — he'd been standing in the only lighted section of the store and was sure to have been spotted.

And then a voice boomed out, a deep man's voice that somehow sounded too old to belong to a gang member, but you never knew these days, maybe they all took steroids or something. Whatever the man said, it was followed by laughter, male and female mixed.

Walter's heart thumped in his ears, but it didn't cover the sound of the footsteps coming ever closer. He'd probably have a heart attack right here and save the gang the trouble of killing him, and maybe get Mr. Mengelson in trouble for making an employee work on Christmas Eve. As nice as the last part of that sounded, Walter couldn't get excited about the first.

And then the footsteps were right on top of him, and before he could move, a man wearing a white wig leaned over the counter and waved at him, laughing and shouting something, but Walter still couldn't understand it, couldn't figure out why the man was so oddly dressed. At first, he thought the man was in a Santa costume and had lost the beard, because he looked young. But he wasn't dressed like any Santa that Walter had ever seen: he wore a high-necked frilly shirt with a waist coat and the hair in the wig was pulled back.

them again — and lighter quick ones coming part of the store.

"Good evening!" said the man, and Walter suddenly understood it perfectly well, as clearly as he had understood his Austrian grandmother for years. He had been trying to force the man's words into English patterns, but this strangely-attired man was speaking German.

"How did you get in here? Is there a door unlocked?" Walter demanded, immediately regretting the belligerence in his voice. Hoping that the man couldn't see how his hands were shaking, he stood up with as much grace as he could muster and said in his most polite voice, "I'm sorry, we're closed now. We'll reopen the day after Christmas at 8 AM." When he finished, he realized that he'd said it all in German — amazing! — he hadn't spoken it in years.

And then, four or five heads crowded up to the counter, all greeting Walter merrily in German, all dressed in odd clothing. Was this some foreign group's Christmas costume party gone astray? Walter did a quick count: there were six of them, four men and two women, all dressed in period costumes.

"The day after Christmas, Anna!" said an older man to the woman standing beside him. She was middle-aged with a warm beauty and a cheerful face. The man took her hand and chuckled happily. "That gives us a day and two nights!"

The young man with the white wig leaned on the counter, studying Walter with a thoughtful look. "Allow me to introduce us. Frau and Herr Bach" — he bowed slightly to the man holding the woman's hand — "Herr Beethoven" — he pointed to a man in disheveled clothing with unruly hair — "Herr Handel" — he indicated an older, white-wigged man — "Frau Mozart" — he touched the arm of a pretty woman in her twenties — "and I'm Herr Mozart." He gave a slight deprecatory nod. We've come to hear the latest recordings — is that the right word? — of our compositions."

The man introduced as Beethoven said, "No more LPs right? Only" — he hesitated — "CDs now?"

Walter stared, speechless for a moment. Was this a joke? he wondered. Actors hired by someone to play the part of the composers? But who could have done it?

The man who called himself Mozart began drumming his fingers on the counter. All five were staring at Walter, waiting.

Well, he thought, what would it hurt if he went along with the joke? It was better than sorting boxes of CDs. Then he reminded himself that no matter how charming they seemed, they had no right to be in Disks Galore after hours. On the other hand, could he afford to refuse them? They must have broken in, unless Mr. Mengelson left the door unlocked, which Walter couldn't imagine. So they were criminals even if they seemed nice. For all he knew, they might get violent if he didn't give them what they wanted. He'd be better off to humor them and look for an opportunity to call the police.

Walter cleared his throat. "I'm Walter Gunther," he said and extended his hand. One by one, they all briefly shook it.

"You're right," he said nodding to the Beethoven character, "it's all CDs now." Something nagged at him and then he caught it. These actors or whoever they were hadn't done very thorough research. "Wait a minute, Mr. Beethoven. Did you realize that you're supposed to be deaf?" Walter let his skepticism show in his voice, and then regretted it. It probably wasn't wise to antagonize these people.

But Beethoven didn't seem angry. He sighed and said, "Ach, yes, that was a bad time. I never even heard my Ninth Symphony." Then he grinned widely at Walter. "But that's all over now, thank heaven. Now I can listen to 10 or 15 different orchestras playing it. So let us begin. Where are these recordings?"

Well, he was glib if nothing else, thought Walter, giving up. "You want the newest recordings? But of what works? Piano? orchestral? opera? What kind of orchestras? Big? Little? Early instruments?"

"All of them!" shouted Beethoven. "Two nights and a day. We have time — we want to hear all of them."

Walter showed them each their respective sections and sent them over to browse through the collection of CDs. Really, what else could he do? There were six of them.

Whoever they were, hired actors or not, they showed such a detailed knowledge of music that Walter decided they must have done considerable research after all. Mozart had asked Walter about several of "his" little-known, infrequently recorded pieces, and had seemed immensely impressed when Walter had been able to find them quickly. Of course, if it were some joke (but who could have done it?), then they were being paid to act impressed.

The Beethoven character was back to the desk in practically no time with an armload of CDs. "Can you play these?"

"I guess so," Walter said uneasily, looking at the stack Beethoven had dumped on the desk. It was Disks Galore's policy to demonstrate an occasional CD if the customer requesting it looked good for multiple sales, but this man had at least twenty CDs, and Walter doubted that he could be categorized as a customer.

Reluctantly, Walter took the top CD and, after a protracted struggle with the cellophane wrapper, removed the disk and put it in the player connected to the public speakers. The pastoral sounds of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony flooded the room. Beethoven dropped into one of the customer courtesy chairs, and began listening with an expression of complete attention.

As the others became engrossed in their browsing, Walter thought that he might be able to risk a call to the police. He bent down and lifted the phone receiver to his ear. But just as his finger hit the nine, Walter glanced up to see the Mozart character striding briskly toward the counter, frowning deeply.

Walter slammed the phone back on the receiver, barely straightening up in time to put on his smile as Mozart reached the desk.

Mozart didn't smile back. "I don't understand. I can't find my E Minor Piano Sonata on any of these" — he seemed to search for words — "these CDs. Not one. And it was the same the last time we came. I couldn't find it anywhere."

"The last time?" Walter asked weakly, his heart pounding in his ears. That had been too close. "How often do you come?"

Mozart considered the question. "Every few decades, I guess. Time is ... is different for us than it is here. We like to come every so often and catch up on what's happening to our music. But I've never found a recording of this sonata. It was the last one I wrote — well, wrote over here, I mean."

Walter frowned with a sudden memory. "Mozart never wrote a piano sonata in E minor," he said. "I could double-check the catalogs, but I'm sure he didn't."

Walter, still stunned, weakly and wonder if he was hallucination produce anything as wonder

The Mozart drew himself up and said a little huffily, "I think I know what I've written."

"Well, there's no trace of it now," said Walter. "So there are no recordings."

Mozart looked so stricken (these actors were very good, thought Walter) that finally Walter said softly, "Maybe it was lost."

"Lost, yes," said Mozart. "Although I don't know how — " He stood there, brow furrowed, deep in thought. Then he threw up his hands, "It's been so long — I don't remember exactly what I did with the manuscript." He wandered back to where Frau Mozart was, and began talking to her, showing no more interest in Walter.

Beethoven had his eyes closed as he listened; the Bach and Handel characters were having an animated conversation, waving CDs in the air and gesturing vigorously; the Mozarts had turned their backs to the desk.

Walter looked down at the phone — he might not get another chance. He moved it down to a shelf below the desk where it would be out of sight, then squatted beside it, lifted the receiver and just about had his finger on the nine when he heard a throat clearing.

He almost dropped the receiver on his foot. Frau Bach was bending over the counter, staring at him curiously. Where had she come from? he wondered, his chest tightening again. How could he explain hiding behind the desk? In a moment of inspiration he shoved the phone on the shelf, punched open his briefcase on the shelf beside it, and lifted out his lunch which had been sitting there since morning. Then he slowly stood up.

"Sorry," he said with an apologetic grin. "Thought I'd sneak a bite of my lunch. I haven't had anything to eat since this morning." At least the last part of that was true.

"You poor man!" Frau Bach's eyes brimmed with sympathy. "Of course you need to eat! We've been rude, forgetting that you've been here all day."

Really, she was quite beautiful, thought Walter, and she smelled, well, heavenly.

She opened the sack and gingerly lifted out the baggy with his peanut butter and jelly sandwich, soggy now and long past its prime. She wrinkled her nose. "This is all you have?"

"Well, there's an apple," said Walter a trifle defensively. His lunches weren't much since Alice had died. Nor his breakfasts or dinners for that matter.

She shook her head, clucking in disbelief. "It's Christmas Eve! A time for feasting! Well!" She shot him a smile that he felt down to his toes. "We'll have to fix that!"

"Herr Streuling!" she said under her breath, bowing her head a little and closing her eyes tight. "Herr Streuling!" She didn't move for a few moments as if listening, then relaxed and smiled. "Herr Streuling, we can't wait! Can you bring the dinner now?"

And as Walter stared, dumbfounded, a man appeared — he just sort of darkened the empty aisle space until he was as solid as the display case nearby. The man carried an enormous silver tray, and behind him appeared two others, also holding trays.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Frau Bach. She turned to Walter, "Where can they set the trays?"

With a start, Walter shut his mouth, which had been gaping, and swooped up the pile of disks on the counter, almost dropping them

to the floor in his haste to make room. "Right here on the counter," he said, and watched as the men set down the trays, the implication of what he'd just seen sinking over him. He stared at the intruders with new understanding: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Handel! They were real, they were here! The room seemed suddenly to be lacking in oxygen and Walter felt a wave of dizziness pass over him, but then he felt a soothing touch on his arm, and he turned to see Frau Bach smiling and pointing to the food.

"What do you think?" she asked.

Walter took a deep breath and focused his eyes on the food. The first tray was filled with meats — thick slices of ham, roast beef, and — Walter blinked hard, could that be goose? — along with some potato and vegetable dishes. The second held breads, candies, and pastries that Walter had last seen as a small child in his grandmother's home in Vienna. On the final tray were stacks of plates, silver and crystal, and four or five bottles of wine.

"Herr Streuling, you're wonderful," said Frau Bach again. She turned to Walter, "Now isn't this more like Christmas?"

Walter, still stunned, could only smile weakly and wonder if he was hallucinating. But could a hallucination produce anything as wonderful as the aromas coming from the food?

"Food so soon?" asked Bach, coming up and lightly draping his arm over Frau Bach's shoulder.

"Poor Herr Gunther hasn't eaten all day," she said.

"Good, good," said Bach. "I listen better on a full stomach anyway." He grinned at Walter.

Beethoven came up beside him waving a CD cover. "I listen to this conductor better with a stomach full of wine," he said with a grimace.

Mozart filled a plate for his wife and one for himself. "There's no trace of my E Minor Sonata," he said to Bach. "Last time, I thought it just hadn't been recorded yet, but — " he shook his head. "Nothing, Herr Gunther tells me it doesn't exist."

Frau Mozart shook her head sadly. "It was your favorite, too."

Under Frau Bach's prodding, Walter filled a plate with more food than he had eaten in the last week, thinking that he'd never finish all of it, but surprising himself sometime later to find his plate completely empty and his hand reaching for more. And after they had all finished eating, Walter pulled out catalogs, brought up screens on the computer, dashed over to the collection and pulled CDs, and talked — talked a decade's worth of music.

And in all the talk and food and music, time blurred and Walter couldn't later remember exactly when anything happened. The exception was just before midnight on Christmas Eve, when Handel rounded them all up and passed out music and they all sang a few choruses from Messiah to usher in Christmas Day. As they were singing, Walter could have sworn he heard an orchestral accompaniment, though he had no idea where it could have come from.

At one point, with only a passing thought to Mr. Mengelson and the quantities of already opened CDs, Walter rounded up boomboxes with earphones for each of them and for a while they all wore earphones and listened intently to the music, sometimes with sighs of contentment or sudden exclamations of disgust. Sometimes, they would take off the earphones and listen together as the music played over the store's system. Beethoven was the most vehement, but they

could only smile hallucinating. But could a ful as the aromas coming from the food?

all had strong opinions about the recordings — loving some, hating others. They listened to their own works, and to each other's, and even to some newer music. And Walter tried — tried — to memorize which recordings they preferred, but later he couldn't remember at all.

And there was more food and more conversation and more music, more glorious music, until finally Walter couldn't hold his eyes open another second and he stretched out on one of the couches in the customer lounge and fell asleep. And after that, although he woke up and talked and listened and ate again, it all swam together in a dreamy fashion: Frau Bach with her dazzling smile, Frau Mozart telling him why she preferred a certain conductor, Bach tapping his foot to a jazz rendition of the A Minor Invention, Mozart with a sudden smile pulling out an old pen, a small bottle of ink, and some manuscript paper from his inside coat pocket, Beethoven ripping off his earphones and shouting, "No!" And music and more music, they must have played half of the classical CDs in the place, concertos, sonatas, symphonies, cantatas, endless music ... music ... music ...

"Gunther!"

Mr. Mengelson's voice startled Walter awake. "Gunther!"

Walter jumped up, still half asleep to see his boss, standing in hat, coat, and gloves, his boots dripping snow onto the linoleum.

"What's — what's?" Mr. Mengelson sputtered and choked on his words, unable to go on. His face turned red and he pointed wildly about the store — "this?" he finally got out.

Walter looked around and what he saw filled him both with joy, a great surging elation, because there was evidence — yes, evidence, everywhere! — that what had happened was not just a dream, and also with dismay because the place was a disaster — CD cases littered every aisle of the classical section and a good many of the other sections too, their cellophane wrappings strewn about. Boomboxes sat on some of the chairs in the lounge and on some of the shelves. There were crumbs all over the information counter and a purple stain that must have come from the wine.

Mr. Mengelson's face was taking on apoplectic hues. "I should have you arrested." He looked at his watch. "But we have to open in half an hour." His voice began to get louder. "Half an hour for our biggest sale of the year! Get it cleaned up!" He was shouting now, "Get it cleaned up! And then I never want to see you in here again."

Walter nodded, grabbed one of the baskets and hurried down the aisles, collecting CDs, thinking Bach stood here, Mozart touched this, Beethoven listened to this! He filled three baskets; when he had picked up all of them, he went back for the trash. By then, Mr. Mengelson had already taken all the boomboxes into the back room. He returned just as Walter was wiping the last of the crumbs and wine stains off the information desk counter, and glared at the three baskets of CDs.

"Gunther, you're going to have to pay for every one them. We'll take the money out of your check and bill you if the paycheck doesn't cover it. Do you understand?"

Walter nodded again. Bill him for the rest! Mengelson would have to get in line behind everyone else.

It was almost time to open. Employees rushed to their stations and began straightening things while Mr. Mengelson went back to the safe to get the money for the cash registers.

With one last look (really, he wouldn't miss this place, but what was he going to do?), Walter retrieved his coat from the back room and headed for the door, but stopped, remembering his briefcase. He found it still under the counter at the information desk, still wide open, just as he'd left it when he'd pulled out his lunch. Walter started to shut the top but stopped — something inside caught his eye. Some paper, manuscript paper, and on top of that a note.

A note! He lifted it up — the paper seemed very fragile — and saw that it had covered five or six coins that looked as if they were gold. The note was in German in an old, ornate script. Walter could barely make it out. "Herr Gunther," it said. "Please accept our apologies — time is so different here that we waited too long, and now we have no time to clean up. Please take the enclosed money as compensation for your trouble." There was a gap of a few spaces and then the note continued, "Didn't we have a glorious Christmas? With much affection, Anna Magdalena Bach."

Walter picked up the coins, his blood suddenly throbbing in his head. They were heavy enough to be gold — if so they could be worth ... he had no idea how much they would be worth. He stuffed them in his coat pocket, not knowing exactly what else to do. But then he saw another note, sitting on the music manuscript paper, which he now realized was covered with notes. The note, also fragile, read, "Herr Gunther: Here is the E Minor — my last piano sonata and the only one in this key: I wrote it out again today. Please see that it does not again get lost. Sincerely, W.A. Mozart."

With trembling hands, Walter started to lift up the manuscript. It looked very old: faded ink on yellow paper that was dry and brittle. Suddenly afraid that his touch would damage it, he gently released it. If it were authentic — if it were authentic ... A lost Mozart sonata. His head swirled with images of press releases, of scholarly musings about the lost Mozart sonata and this mysterious Walter Gunther, obviously some contemporary of Mozart, of its discoverer, the modern Walter Gunther, modestly saying, "I found it among my Austrian grandmother's possessions — it must have been in her husband's family for years" (really, he was an honest man, but nobody would believe the truth); of bills paid, and possible jobs — lecturing about the sonata, perhaps, or volunteering in a museum. If the scholars found it authentic ...

Walter felt a surge of confidence, as soothing as Frau Bach's hand on his arm, that the sonata would pass all the tests. Stranger things had happened, most of them in the last two nights. He snapped shut the briefcase and started toward the exit of Disks Galore.

"Gunther!" Mr. Mengelson called from a tangle of people at the front checkstands. He hurried over to Walter.

Walter cut him off before he could open his mouth. "I'll pay for all of the CDs," he said. "Of course, when I've paid for them, I should be able to take them home." (Think of it! Owning CDs that Mozart and Bach had touched!) "And I'll pay for any other damages that you find."

Mr. Mengelson started to speak, but Walter raised his voice and kept talking. "And by the way, it's not Mo-zart, it's Mo-zart. It makes you look stupid when you say it wrong."

Then, briefcase in hand, Walter turned from the dumbfounded expression on Mr. Mengelson's face, and walked out of the store. ♦



An Artist Out of His Time

SAN JULIAN

BY JOSEP TOUTAIN

HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN BORN IN THE 17TH CENTURY when the Court of Spain gave its help and protection to the great artists of the day. Like Velázquez and many others, Sanjulian would have dedicated his life to painting kings, aristocrats, and the gods of Olympus. Instead, he appeared in my office one day in 1961!

My art agency, S.I. Artists, from its studio in Barcelona, dedicated most of its energy to producing comic magazines, and color illustrations for British publishing companies. It was the time of the "beat" mania, the fashion of Mary Quant and the splendor of Carnaby Street. Many great artists who later in the '1970s became well known in the United States (Pepe Gonzalez, Esteban Maroto, Victor de la Fuente) transcribed the lyrics of the Beatles (and other pop singers) onto the comic page. Given the situation, I wondered what I could do with a young artist who showed me only historical and mythological



One of Sanjulan's favorite images, Through the Ages mixes vampires with the romance of the middle ages.



illustrations...

But he was very good for his 20 years. Besides, I knew that the aesthetics of the beat generation would not last a lifetime.

"What are you doing now?"

"I'm studying at the School of Belles Arts of San Jordi here in Barcelona."

"Well, continue studying and keep in contact with us," I said as an excuse for not being able to offer him any work right then and there.

A COUPLE OF WEEKS LATER THIS STUBBORN boy was again in my office — with new samples, not historical or fantastic, but thrillers, westerns, and science fiction. I then discovered the second positive facet of Sanjulián's artistic temperament: his great curiosity for all genre of illustration. He liked everything. So much so that he became a fantastic collector of books, memorabilia and, later, videos to aid him in his research. The thriller sample would have been an excellent poster for an American movie of the 1960s, as was also the case with

the western and the science fiction pieces.

I telephoned our art director and our sales director: "This fellow is a genius. Find work for him, preferably in paperback covers."

In a few years, Sanjulián became one of the most successful illustrators in Europe. In Germany, Scandinavia, but mostly in England, he worked for the most prestigious publishers of the time: Fontana, Panther, Fawcett, Ballantine, and Arrow (for whom he still works today). All of them fell before his awesome talent.

In 1971, he began his conquest of the New World. America. Sanjulián had finished his studies at San Jordi, was married and had settled his home and studio in a marvelous small village on the Mediterranean coast called Sitges (now a world-famous first-class resort). Still young, he had already an impressive portfolio. I arranged for him to meet with some U.S. paperback publishers who were justifiably impressed with his samples. But the person who saw the depth of this young man's genius was Jim Warren, publisher of the legendary comic magazines *Creepy*, *Eerie*,



and *Vampirella*.

But to be seen in (more aptly on) Jim Warren's magazines was to evidence a certain amount of hubris on Sanjulián's part, because inevitably he would be compared with the master, Frank Frazetta, and with other outstanding American commercial artists who periodically painted for these magazines. But for someone cut from the cloth of Velázquez the outcome was inevitable: Sanjulián's work during the Warren era was superb and was recognized as such by his American peers and, more



ABOVE: For the art for The Standing Sanjulián was given the freedom to paint the image as he wanted.

TOP LEFT: After the Fire is one of Sanjulián's earlier sword and sorcery images. LEFT: The Enigmatic Queen is a non-commissioned work from the artist's portfolio.

important, by the magazines' fans.

San Jordi is a very good art school; but teachers there — teachers everywhere — do not work miracles. No. It takes a special grace we call "talent" to make a Sanjulián. To see his oils fixed on canvas, to study his originals, is nothing less than impressive. It's like standing in front of a painting from the 17th century hanging in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York or in The Prado in Madrid (Velázquez's home town). But it is much more impressive to watch him paint, as I have been fortunate to do many times. To



ABOVE: The Cobra Queen was an early cover assignment for Warren Publishing's *Vampirella* magazine. RIGHT: Sanjulian's cover for Geanne Kalogridis' *Covenant with the Vampire: The Diaries of the Family Dracul*. RIGHT BOTTOM: One of Sanjulian's recent cover assignments was for the Bantam Books fantasy series *The Children of the Lion: Trumpet and the Sword* by Peter Danielson.



say it is child's play for him is not to utter a cliché. I've worked with artists all my life and Sanjulian makes easy what for the majority of illustrators is extremely difficult, if not impossible. His technical acumen is second to none; his aesthetic sensibility is sublime.

SANJULIAN'S GREAT CURIOSITY FOR all mass media themes has led him to accumulate over 30 years an archive that is staggering. You cannot begin to imagine how complete his reference material is—and in his own studio! This is the secret that has per-

mitted him to live and enjoy the Mediterranean atmosphere while producing Victorian illustrations for Great Britain, mythological Norsemen from Scandinavia's seafaring legends, or western paintings for fine art galleries in California and Arizona.

In 1978, Sanjulian exhibited at the prestigious Society of Illustrators in New York City. Every major art director in mass market publishing attended, as did many editors and publishers. This was his true baptism in the field of American illustration. It was a palpable demonstration of the respect that this Spanish conquistador of the paintbrush

had earned from art directors (Titans in their own right) such as Barbara Bertoli, Len Leone, Ed Rofheart, Ian Ballantine, and many others.

In some ways Sanjulian's success in the American market has made him a prisoner of the United States. Most of his work since 1978 has been for this market, though he always keeps a part of his palette for his native Spain and a few other European clients. Recently, he has turned his brushes to fine art painting.

This "painter of the 17th century" found the way to apply fabulous technical skills and



knowledge of color to depict his inexhaustible love of fantasy through simple (but strong) curiosity. He says that without curiosity he would have nothing to show. And anyone who knows Sanjulián's work knows that he will always have something new to show to the lovers of fantasy illustration. ■

*Josep Toutain is a writer, editor, art director, publisher, and agent. He is the editor of *Historia del Comics* (History of the Comic), a four-volume study of the comics yet to be published in the United States. He has been Sanjulián's agent (and fan) for more than 35 years. Sanju-*



*How can a maiden be true if she is false?
How can a curse be wicked if it is just?*

Silver Apples

BY BEVERLY SUAREZ-BEARD

Illustration by Steven Adler

HE CAME, LIKE THE OTHERS, from the western desert. From her high tower window she watched him, a dark shape atop a dark steed, toiling across pale sands. The setting sun rode red and bloated above the mountains behind him; his shadow stretched out before him, pointing his way like a finger, pointing him towards his doom.

Farcel coughed wetly in the bed behind her. "He'll be here tonight then, Jemileh?"

"Tonight, perhaps tomorrow. I think he'll stop to rest. He looks tired."

"Of course he's tired, the foolish male, travelling in the heat of the day. A fool and his life are soon parted. It should be easy this time, Jemileh."

The rider made camp after the sun had set, the scarlet flower of his fire blossoming in the distance. The fire died, and still Jemileh watched, afraid of sleep and the dreams that it might bring, dreams of loneliness and death and the one who came before, the one she might have loved. When at last she slept, it was with her head resting against the sill.

The stone ones awakened her at dawn with their moaning and bellowing. The tower shook with the force of their noise. It had been months since she had heard them, and then it had not been she, but Farcel who had gone to answer their summons. "What are you waiting for?" Farcel said, her voice cross and thick with sleep.

The faces of the stone ones frowned as the stranger passed among them, woman-faces beneath stone wings. Stone claws clicked and clattered against stone pedestals. Fanged stone mouths bayed and roared, their noise the belling of the death hounds at the ending of the world. The stranger had come prepared for the noise: the ears of his horse were covered with padding. His hands covered his own ears; his face was contorted in a grimace. Jemileh fled down the stairs.

The stone ones quieted as she stepped out among them. The rider's grimace relaxed. Amid the nest of black draperies, his face seemed young.

"What place is it you seek?" Jemileh asked.

"The Tower of the Moon," the stranger said. "Can it be that this is the place?"

"This is the Tower of the Moon," she said. "Be warned, stranger. There is danger here."

"I have been warned of guardians, devourers of men's bodies and stealers of souls. I have also been told that he of pure soul need not fear these monsters."

His face was soft with youth, his eyes large and melting brown. It hurt her to think that he must suffer at her hands. Purity of heart would not save him; it had not saved that other. "You speak of the one foretold," she said. "But his purity will outshine the purity of other men as the sun outshines the moon."

"Ah," said the stranger. "And how do you know I am not he?"
"The stone ones will welcome him, as they did not welcome you. Do you long for death, stranger? You will find it here."
"My lady," he said. "A life depends on me, and I cannot betray it."
He said nothing of her beauty, nor did he attempt to woo her. She dared to hope her beguilements would be without power over him. And yet, if he persisted in his quest?
"You will want food," she said. "And water. Follow me."

HE RESTED IN THE GARDEN, AMID ROSES AND JASMINE. SHE WATCHED him as he slept: the smooth planes of his young face, the long, ringed fingers of his hands, the narrow palms, blue tattooed. Once she had been as young as he, as foolish. Once she had tried to die for love.

The young man awakened. He smiled at her. "My lady," he said. "You are fair. If not for my quest, if not for the silver apples, I might hope to linger here."

"The silver apples," Jemileh said. "What do you know of them?"
"That that way to the garden where they grow is here, if this is indeed the Tower of the Moon. That the apples may cure any illness, may even confer unending strength and beauty and length of days to he who eats of them."

"And you wish these apples for yourself?"
"I wish them for my brother," he said. "Without them, he will not see sixteen."

"There are no doctors who can cure him?"
"None, fairest lady. We have tried them all: the physicians, the touchers with hands, the petitioners with their prayers."

It would be an easy task to love him, if she did not think of what must happen at the end. Yet it was strange that his eyes did not gleam with the lust she knew so well, that his body did not shiver with it. Even the noble among men suffered at restraining themselves in the presence of a guardian.

She would do what she must.
She sat on the stone bench beside him. She smoothed the silk of her gown over the contours of her hips, of her legs. She touched the heaviness of her golden comb, let her fingers linger in the dusks of her hair, releasing the sweetness of its perfume. She lowered her eyes. "Sir," she murmured. "You say you find me fair?"

She felt the closeness of him, the disturbance of the air caused by his breathing. She felt his lips come close, the tenderness of their touch upon hers, without urgency, without need. He drew away, as no man could, as no man had ever done before. He drew away and said: "As fair as the moon in her fullness, my lady. Fair enough to love."

Jemileh opened her eyes. "There is no love in what a man feels for the guardians," she said.

The young man took her hand, and led it toward his breast. He would show her the beating of his heart then. He would protest his undying adoration, his desperate fondness. What foolishness. He was noble, but a fool.

He pressed her hand down against his breast, against what should have been flat and firm, muscle and bone. He pressed her hand down, and she felt softness. Softness and roundness, unresisting, the nipple larger than a man's, growing hard beneath her fingers.

"There is no love in what a man may feel," the stranger said.

THE NAME OF THE STRANGER WAS NEDAL. SHE SAID SHE HAD COME from beyond the western mountains, from far Bayrak on the Lake of Haran, where the houses are built on pilings and the people fish for their dinners through holes in the floor. She had travelled for months, she said, a woman alone. She had escaped from slavers; she had lived on grubs and the flesh of the tutub lizard, which is fatal unless properly treated. All this she had done for love of her brother.

And the courage of Nedal, the purity of her purpose, were as a splinter in the heart of Jemileh. For only that rarest of presences at the Tower of the Moon, a mortal woman, may release a guardian from her bondage.

A mortal woman betrayed.
"Woman or man, I may not give you an apple," Jemileh said. "Linger if you will, but nothing will change that."

"Yet I must try," Nedal said. "And the trying is not unpleasant." The stone ones howl when a stranger dies, or when he leaves. Days passed, and the stone ones remained silent.

"We can not have this stranger lurking about," Fareel said, from her high tower bed. "Make up your mind to kill her or use her. It's too late for me, but you can do it, Jemileh. Although I'll miss you if you go."

But then Nedal came and nursed Fareel, and told her tales of far-away lands. Of islands of green, where blue-skinned savages ride horned fish across the waves. Of jewelled Carchemish, where the feet of the king must never touch the earth nor anything mundane, so that his very bed is made of diamond and his bedsheets of qatu tears. Of pirates and their plunder she told, and the rape of fair Happa, that city of gardens by the western sea. And when she spoke of the sacking of cities, her eyes brightened and her breathing quickened, which troubled Jemileh. But then she turned from these things, and spoke instead of love.

It seemed to Jemileh as she listened that Nedal's eyes lingered upon her then. It seemed to her that in Nedal's eyes was a tenderness, a promise of love that was more than desire.

"IT'S NOT RIGHT THAT A STRANGER SHOULD REMAIN," FAREEL SAID. "But sometimes, I must admit, she's more amusing than you are, Jemileh."

"She's not a stranger now," Jemileh said.

NIGHT CAME WHEN NEDAL SAT in the garden with Jemileh.

"What is it like," Nedal asked, "to love a man and see him die?"

"I never love them," Jemileh said. "I know them for too short a time. They have my body, but never my love."

"And it gives you no pain?"
"It gives me pain. The one before you, I thought I might have loved. If I had been free."

There was a silence between them then. They listened to the wind, and the song of the nightingale in the palms. After a while, Nedal took her hand. She looked at Jemileh with dark, soft eyes that mirrored the moon, woman's eyes. The memory of kissing those full lips, soft lips, woman's lips, made Jemileh shiver.

"How do they die?" Nedal asked softly.
"It is loving me that kills them," Jemileh said. "No man may lie with a guardian and live."

Then Nedal said: "But perhaps a woman—"
"No," Jemileh said. "The risk is too great—"

And then Nedal's lips pressed against her own, warm lips, petal-soft, luscious as the fruit of the date palm, and the shudder that went through Jemileh then was a new thing.

"I love you as no man ever could," murmured Nedal. "It is your own sweet self that I love, no spell or enchantment."

And it was strange to Jemileh, the thought that a woman could love her in the way of a man. She and Fareel had never loved in such a fashion. And yet... and yet, had she not wondered about this very thing? Had she not dreamed about it?

In the corner of the garden, the yemah lilies grow like young trees, their flowers pale and upturned, the grass beneath them velvet-smooth. Nedal led her there, drew her down upon the grass. And the hands of Nedal were like two soft doves, fluttering and seeking, touching first here, where golden comb rode amidst dusky tresses, then there, at the shoulder fastenings, and at the girdle fastenings, so that at the last, Jemileh's gown lay cast off among the lily's roots.

Then it was Jemileh's turn to pull aside concealing garments, to reveal the startling purity of Nedal, the breasts like full moons that suddenly she blushed to show, so that they peeped like roe deer from behind her robes, the round hips, the slim thighs.

Beneath the yemah lilies they learned each other's secrets, beneath the lilies whose seed distilled is an intoxicant, both poisonous and sweet. And Jemileh remembered what it was to love.

IN THE MORNING, NEDAL SADDLED HER HORSE.

Jemileh watched her preparing to go, and the pain she felt was a solid thing, as solid as the tower's stones or the gold of her comb. She cared nothing now for the release Nedal might have brought her; it was Nedal herself she wanted, only Nedal. "You need not go yet," Jemileh said.

"What terrors await were I to find the apples," said Nedal, "I do not know. I must assume you would be harmed, as well as myself. Else you would surely have found me an apple, knowing my brother's plight."

"Yes," Jemileh said softly. "I would."

"Now that I love you, how can I continue to place you in danger? I will seek the apples as long as I remain here. I have sought them already. It is through no fault of my own that I have not found them."

"No," Jemileh said. "You cannot find them alone."

"My brother is dying, Jemileh. He may already be dead. It's time for me to go home."

Weeping, Jemileh watched her climb into the saddle, weeping, watched her ride westward. The howling of the stone ones was the roar of the lightning, the shriek of the wind-storm. Dust devils danced between the stone ones' feet.

And Jemileh ran amongst them.

Nedal rode slowly, often turning to look back. She saw Jemileh racing towards her, and pulled up her horse.

"Stay," Jemileh said. "Stay. I'll find a way to get you an apple."

"No," Nedal said. "For love of you."

"For love of me, stay," Jemileh said. "For love of your brother, let me give you an apple. For his sake."

Nedal was silent. At last she said: "For my brother's sake," and turned her horse back towards the tower.

"I THOUGHT SHE WAS LEAVING," FAREEL SAID. "I was sorry to see her go. But I like it less that she came back. What are you up to, little sister?"

"She came back because she loves me. She couldn't bear to leave me."

"My sickness hasn't clouded my brain, little sister. I see the look on your face. Think, foolish one. When the rules are broken, we're the ones who pay. Do you want to end up like me, ugly and bedridden...or worse?"

But it seemed to Jemileh that her life had been a poor thing, before the coming of Nedal. The beating of her heart, the sighing of her breath, all were for Nedal now. The days of monotony, of watching, how could she have the courage to survive them, when Nedal had gone?

"Jemileh," Fareel said. "Remember what brought you here in the first place. Love is a good thing, but only if tempered by wisdom and moderation."

"I loved a man before," Jemileh said.

IN THE TOWER OF THE MOON, THE STAIRS THAT LEAD TO THE UPPER levels are well-worn by centuries of use, their stones symmetrically indented. There are other stairs in the Tower of the Moon. These

stairs lead downward into the darkness beneath the earth, and they are not so well-trodden.

It was down these stairs that Jemileh led Nedal. Down these stairs, by candlelight, until the air grew cold and the walls dank and incandescent with fungi and glimmerworms.

At last the stairs ended. They stood in a pit, facing a blank wall. "I have searched here before," Nedal whispered, and the whisper echoed up the stairwell's dark chimney. "I found nothing."

Jemileh stretched out a hand. On the bare stone of the wall, she drew patterns with her fingers, patterns that incandescenced, each part fading as she worked the next.

The patterns coalesced. A door appeared, in the center the image of a tree, with fruit of silver. "Touch the roots with the palm of your right hand," whispered Jemileh. "It is written that a guardian may hold the key, but only a mortal may turn it."

Together they went into the garden.

THERE ARE OTHER DOORS TO THAT GARDEN, but they did not see them. For there is no end, no edge, but the one that is passed through. And there is no center, but only a heart.

They sensed no distance, no passage of time, yet at last they came to the garden's heart, and the Tree that grows there.

Around the center of the garden was a ring of fire, but Jemileh made several arcane passes with her hands, and the ring of fire disappeared. At the base of the tree was a fanged serpent; at Jemileh's touch it slithered away.

She took only one apple and made sure that Nedal took no other. For each apple taken, a guardian must pay.

They passed through the loveliness of that garden, and it seemed to them a dream. They stood before the door, and it seemed to Jemileh too much to bear that she must pass through it, when death waited for her beyond.

She placed the apple in Nedal's right hand. "Tell your brother about me," she said. "As you give him this."

They opened the door.

THE TOWER SHOOK AS THEY STARTED UP THE steps. The tower shook and the mortar crumbled. The earth shuddered with the moving of the stone ones, the dance of their welcome and their grief.

The heart of Jemileh still beat; her blood still flowed. Her body was still firm and young and healthy. Yet there was only one way that that could be. When the dance had ended, and the stairs were steady enough to climb, she ran to the high tower room and found it empty. Fareel was gone from the ebony bed. There was a new stone one in the avenue now.

Fareel had given her life for Jemileh's sake.

AGAIN, SHE STOOD AND WATCHED, WHILE NEDAL PREPARED FOR A journey. "Stay but a little," she said. "A day. A night. No more."

"My brother is dying, Jemileh. An hour too late, a space of minutes, and my journey will have been in vain."

In vain? Jemileh thought. When we have known love?

"Stay with me a while," she said. "In the garden, in the kitchen, it doesn't matter. An hour. Half an hour. Talk to me about your

Continued on page 82

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LORD MADOC

Continued from page 47

tleman I will not be gentle!"

The Red Knight struck well and skillfully; his sword skipped over the top of Madoc's shield and struck Madoc's helm, jarring him to the teeth. Madoc's blow was not particularly skillful, just unstoppable. The Red Knight's shield broke and fell to pieces. The Red Knight blocked with his sword and Madoc battered it aside as if it were a twig. His return stroke sent the Red Knight reeling from his saddle. Madoc leaped down, gasping for breath, and stood over the Red Knight's still form. "Yield," he said between breaths, "or die." There was no answer. Madoc cut the lacings on the Red Knight's helmet and pulled it free.

"I said —" The armor was empty. It held the smell of sweat and blood, but that was all. Madoc looked up. The pavilions were nowhere to be seen. There was only the empty armor, the two weary horses, and the White Knight and the Black Knight leading Gwynfyr between them, riding a white palfrey. Her wrists were bound.

"The Red Knight's arms, armor, and horse are yours, as is our custom," the Black Knight said, "but it is not your fate to slay him, as I think you may understand." Madoc nodded, though his attention was all on Gwynfyr, who smiled at him.

"And my lady?"

"You beat our brother-in-arms fairly," the White Knight said, "which in truth is the only way it can be done. Like you, we honor our word."

The Black Knight took his dagger and cut Gwynfyr's bonds. The White Knight handed her mount's reins to Madoc. "Such is the way of things that there will never be peace between us," he said, "but I trust you are content with this victory for now."

So he was. Madoc watched the knights ride away, then took his lady home again, and they were happy for a time. Still, Madoc was a man, and a Welshman at that, and soon the day came when Gwynfyr found him making preparation to leave.

"Prince Llewellyn has sent for me," was all he said at first.

Gwynfyr was far from content with that, as you can well imagine. "When will I see you again?"

Madoc sighed. "When? I do not know. A better question might be 'where?' to which I must reply: In Heaven, my Lady, if my own sins weigh no more than I think. Time was always against us, but now I fear the Black Knight rides mostly with Edward these days. I do not think he will delay our meeting a second time."

Madoc kissed his lady farewell and rode away, and that was the last she saw of him this side of Paradise. Or at least that is the tale as was told to me, and it's as true as truth need be. ♦

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KALEIDOSCOPE

Continued from page 51

There were more pieces to the past, to memories, than I'd ever realized. All the pieces made up my father, both the way I remembered him and the way I now knew him to have been. I couldn't find the right balance of pieces to make my memories the only reality, but I was sure such a balance existed. It was just a question of seeing the right things.

I tried again the next night, and the next. But by then my memories were confused, mixing what I saw in the kaleidoscope with what Mother told me with what I remembered remembering. And the more she had talked, breaking the silence-barrier of years, the more the patterns shifted. By the time I went back to New Mexico, I was convinced there'd never been a pattern at all. I was an over-imaginative child still. The kaleidoscope came back with me, to sit on top of the bookcase in my office. My attempt to shift the past I labeled "grief-induced insanity," tucked into a neat mental file folder, and closed away in a filing cabinet in the back of my mind.

All this was five years ago. Mother and I get along better now than we ever did while he was alive. She's relaxed, now she no longer needs to keep his secret. I think she's even rediscovered the love she once felt for him, buried beneath the bitterness. Every once in a while, I trip over a memory that doesn't match Mother's memories. But I've accepted the past now.

She visited me last week, though, and picked up the kaleidoscope. "I remember when he bought this for you," she said, looking through it. "It was more than we could afford, but he'd missed so many parties and school concerts. He wanted to make it up to you. This was always your favorite toy, I remember. I don't blame you, it's lovely. You used to tell me you could see anything you wanted through this." She twisted the end of the barrel, holding it up to the light.

"That's right," I said. "Anything at all."

Last night I started to write down my memories of childhood, the old ones, the memories of what I thought was going on around me. Drinking was only one part of what my father was. Someday, I'll find the pattern again, our life as I remember it, and this time it will be the only reality.

LOOK THROUGH THE BRASS TUBE AT THE BITS and pieces of life. A man's laughter, a woman's tears, a child's memories. Twist the tube and watch the patterns fall into place, a new one with each twist. Knowing adds new pieces, and new pieces change the patterns forever.

Patterns look like snowflakes through a kaleidoscope. No two snowflakes are alike, did you know that? Never two alike. And you can never find the same pattern again.

Never two alike. ♪

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It's been widely observed that villains are more interesting than heroes. Warner Bros. has demonstrated fairly conclusively that you can put anyone behind Batman's mask (though the last two films show that you need to be careful who you put in the director's chair), but Warner's never scrimps on the big name stars for the baddies. LucasFilm will tell you that one of the most popular characters in the whole *Star Wars* saga is Boba Fett — a character who utters fewer than a dozen lines in the trilogy. He wears a mask, he has no history, we know absolutely nothing about him except that he's scum. He sells like hotcakes. Villains are fun.

Pitting hero against villain has made good drama at least since the time of *The Iliad* (I would say since Gilgamesh, but the old king has never come off too favorably in my reading of the tale). It has fueled stories, novels, and films. It has also provided the backbone of most computer games. The founders of the genre — from *Space Invaders* to *King's Quest* — are basic good vs. evil affairs, with the player taking the side of light and right.

This tradition of player as hero has continued through the first decades of computer gaming. Nowhere was this more true than in fantasy gaming. Overall, it's

been quite a blast. But sometimes, especially when the story starts to seem like any of a dozen others, it begins to get a little old.

Bullfrog, creator of such popular games as *Populous* and *Theme Park*, has turned the tables on fantasy gaming in their latest creation, *Dungeon Keeper*. Instead of playing the hero bent on rooting out evil, you take the part of the villainous master of the dungeon. Your tasks are to expand your underground lair and gather more wealth to your selfish horde. And at all times you must defend yourself from the intrusions of those pesky folks with armor and swords.

As an apprentice dungeon master, you are handed a snug little lair in an out-of-the-way kingdom. Your initial assets consist of little but a handful of imps and a big pulsing ball called a "dungeon heart," which is the one item in your underground empire that must be protected at all costs. If you allow those treacherous surface dwellers to reach and hack up the dungeon heart... well, it's all over for your reign as dark lord.

The imps are your primary tools in shaping your dungeon. Under your direction, they can mine out new chambers, dig for gold, and help in the construction of some basic dungeon facilities. When they're not actively building new areas, the imps can help repair or reinforce other areas. In fact, the imps are so endlessly useful that you'll quickly find yourself wanting to buy more. Fortunately, you can. Imps are the only creatures in *Dungeon Keeper* that can be had for gold alone, but beware — even the fantasy world obeys the rules of supply and demand. Keep buying imps and you'll drive the price of these little weasels straight through the roof.

Other than imps, creatures in *Dungeon Keeper* are not purchased, they're persuaded to come to your dungeon based on its size, strength, and reputation for nastiness. A few decent recreational facilities — like a nicely equipped torture chamber — can also be an

Bullfrog's latest computer game, *Dungeon Keeper*, turns the tables on gaming by letting you be the bad guy — the evil master of your own underground lair.



Terry Goodkind

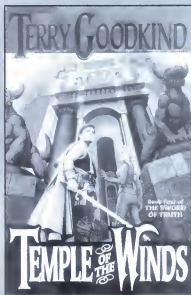
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effective lure for creatures of darkness. Special "portals" within the dungeon will allow creatures to appear in the depths and get straight to work wreaking havoc.

Creatures can be useful for far more than just going claw to sword with wandering dogooders. By building and equipping special rooms in your dungeon, you can get a lot more than your monsters than brute force. Industrious sorts, like Orcs and Trolls, can be sent off to workshops to forge traps and heavy doors. More skilled creatures, including the fearsome dragons, are capable of learning spells by pulling a few all-nighters in the dungeon library.

As the invaders begin to pour in, you'll find that there are other more creative — and entertaining — ways to build up your forces. For instance, torturing an enemy to death results in a useful ghost that you can put under your command. Piling up bodies in a cemetery generates vampires. Leaving enemies to starve in a prison cell gives you walking skeletons. Why any of these creatures should be loyal to you is a wonder, but they are, so don't knock it. The strangest way to get new creatures, and probably the most disturbing room you can create, is one in which giant eyeballs sing an endless round-robin of chants. Place a creature in this room, and it will summon others of its kind.

Once you've pushed past the initial levels, you'll find that there is more to worry about than a few wandering knights and assorted

hangers-on. There are other dungeon masters out there, and they all want to be top dog. To prevent your dungeon from being taken over, there is only one recourse — get them before they get you. The pressure gradually increases throughout the game, and you'll find that you have to work harder and harder to stay ahead.

Dungeon Keeper is not flawless. While most of the game is presented in keen three-quarters perspective, it also offers the option of a creature's-eye view. This sounds great until you realize that the point of view engine seems very dated in this post-*Quake* world. On another front, parents might want to think before getting this game for a young child. It's not only a little gory, there's a certain level of reveling in the pain of others that might be disturbing to youngsters. Or maybe the youngsters wouldn't be bothered — which could be disturbing to parents.

These minor quibbles aside, *Dungeon Keeper* is a blast. Play this game for a few weeks and you should have your Evil Laugh well developed.

Remaking Mythology

If you think of Clive Barker as just a horror writer, then you haven't been paying attention. Sure, Barker started off as a crafter of high-class gore. The chief attribute of his early stories seems to be an ability to describe the most revolting instances of decay, depravity, and decapitation in jarringly eru-

dite terms. But his recent work has outgrown the blood-soaked page.

With *Imajica*, Barker defined his own combination of mythology and religion. Earth, it seems, rests among five different spheres of reality. The novel follows the journey of a man nicknamed "Gentle," who just may be the second son of God. Gentle climbs his way back up through the five Imajica as he seeks both a reunion with his father and an explanation for his circumstances. Along the vast journey, Barker constructs an elaborate morality play — a horrific version of *Pilgrim's Progress*. The story concerns questions on the nature of God, the purpose of creation, differences between men and women, thought, reality — the whole ball of wax.

In *Imajica* the collectable card game, players represent vast forces seeking to establish a presence in each of the five dominions. To do so, they recruit and manipulate lesser, but still very powerful, characters and creatures. These creatures attempt to gain control of strategic points within each Imajica and hold them against the assault of enemies. The first player to secure a place in each of the five worlds is the winner.

The character cards carry a diverse range of abilities and interact in complex ways. Adding special cards can allow individual character cards to gain more control of a situation. Gameplay can be quick and brutal, or more tactical and well thought out. Despite the wide range of cards, which can

"I have never been so completely transported to another world. Your book 'Words In The Wind,' is not just the realization of magic and wonder, but that emotional taste of ones own personal fantasies, finally, brought to life. As scary as it was, I still did not want to leave, and believe even now that I have truly been there, flying across the sky at the breast of a Great Mah. Vivid and real, I miss all your characters like never before."

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Gamers should find the art on Imajica's cards to be first rate. Many of the images are every bit as disturbing as the Clive Barker novel on which the game is based.

make the game appear uneven, there is a fine sense of balance once the game is in motion. Backed up by simple rules, the game allows for surprisingly sophisticated action.

After playing *Imajica*, I'm going to make a promise: From now on, I will not mention *Magic: The Gathering* in every review of a collectible card game. *Magic* might have started the genre, but with games like *Imajica*, it's clear that there is more to life than lands and summonings. *Imajica* shows every sign of being a "second generation" card game, designed by people who carefully observed the failure of the many *Magic* imitators. Despite the format, the game play is not derivation.

HarperPrism has experience as a publisher of *Magic: The Gathering* books and a distributor of *Magic* cards. In *Imajica*, they've applied their experience to a strong world and a equally strong game design. The result is a card game that deserves a following of its own.

A Game for the Ages

Microsoft has been pretty selective when it comes to games marketed under its mammoth banner. Only a handful of titles have benefited from the near universal presence and unlimited dollars of Billy and his gang. When a new title joins their stable, it's always worth a look, and this time, it's also worth a purchase.

Age of Empires is the creation of a small company called Ensemble Studios. The name may not be well known at the moment, but I predict that it soon will be. Headed up by Bruce Shelley, the co-designer of the all-time best game *Civilization*, Ensemble has pulled together a terrific little package.

Combining elements of both *Warcraft* and *Civilization*, *Age of Empires* challenges players to take a primitive tribe of hunter-gatherers and lead them from the Stone Age to the time of the Roman Empire. Don't expect to be building tanks and nuclear missiles in this game, *Age of Empires* cuts off at 0 AD, but you'll have plenty to do in the meantime. *Age of Empires* may be the first game that takes the hunter-gatherer role seriously. One of the most important resources in your growing

civilization is food. To get that food you're going to need to send folks off to forage fruits and berries, or fish from rich shoals, or send out teams of villagers to hunt and bring back quarry.

As you contend with the forces of nature, you must also struggle against the neighboring tribes. Your first encounter with your neighbor may be the peaceful passage of a wandering forager, but soon enough some nasty folks armed with clubs or axes will come calling. To protect your growing town, you'll need to build all the structures that have become so familiar from other strategy games: a barracks to train troops, an archery range to equip archers, and a stable to provide cavalry.

Many of the buildings you construct will provide the ability to upgrade your technology. A storage pit provides a place to develop leather armor. A grainery allows you to develop a marketplace, and ultimately farming, so that your people can quit having to hunt and bring in a more regular stream of food. But none of the upgrades provided by individual buildings can match that of the ultimate upgrade — going up to a new civilization level.

From the original Stone Age level, you can jump to the "Age of Tools," which allows the creation of new buildings, ships, and weapons. From there it's on to the Bronze Age, and from there it's one final hop to the Iron age. Each of these upgrades greatly increases the options open to your civilization and allows a significant jump in power.

Each object in *Age of Empires* is accompanied by the keenest animation ever brought to a strategy game. Foragers swing their baskets merrily, chariots glide over the land, and soldiers march with purpose. Backed up by equally stunning sound effects, you get the impression that this is not a game at all, it's a little world brought down to your desktop.

Tying the best visuals in strategy to a tough, complex engine, *Age of Empires* promises to be the next great thing in strategy gaming. It may never replace *Civilization* in my heart, but it has certainly found its way onto my screen. I don't expect it to leave any time soon. **A**

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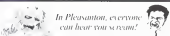
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ABOVE: Xena's Lucy Lawless returns this fall from her run on Broadway in *Grease*. RIGHT: Highlander's Duncan McCloud continues to behead his adversaries in syndication.

Chung (Charles Nelson Reilly), who is threatened with death after he writes a controversial book. Enter stone-faced Frank Black (Lance Henriksen), who helps the writer out. Revelations include news that the Millennium

Group has been around since the death of Christ, and *Millennium's* parade of serial killers gives way to demons and angels.

Saturday sees the return of NBC's *The Pretender* in an earlier time slot, with chameleon-

like title character Michael T. Weiss taking on jobs as an anatomy professor, a thief, a fashion photographer and a Beverly Hills plastic surgeon. On CBS, *Early Edition* is back, and the newspaper is still delivered a day early, allowing lead actor Kyle Chandler to continue to do good deeds. This year he gets a job and, with devious stockbroker buddy Chuck



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The Fox summer show *Roar*, set in 400 A.D. England, is not currently on the Fall schedule.

(Fisher Stevens), take over McGinty's bar.

Also on Saturday, *Mystery Science Theater 3000* enters its ninth season, and its second season on the Sci-Fi Channel. The Channel has revitalized the show, promoting it and shooting special one-hour segments covering summer movies and the Oscars. Like many, I was concerned when *MST3K* lost Trace Beaulieu, who played both Dr. Clayton Forrester and provided the voice of Crow, and who was replaced by Mary Jo Pehl (as Mrs. Forrester). It was yet another loss after the departures of Joel Hodgson and Frank Conniff. But as many fans know, the series has weathered those losses and kept going. Pehl has turned out to be a worthy successor to Beaulieu, and Bill Corbett has made a smooth transition as puppeteer and voice to Crow. And with access to the Sci-Fi Channel's stock of movies, the gang has a lot of fresh new material to snipe at. In short, the show's managed to stay pretty darned good. The Channel also picked up the on-again, off-again *Sliders*, to the delight of its fans. The alternate reality show was canceled by Fox and immediately picked up by the Sci-Fi Channel, which will air all 48 episodes, and will produce 22 more in 1998 with Star Jerry O'Connell.

Rounding out the week in syndication is the dynamic duo of *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* and *Xena: Warrior Princess*. These phenomenally popular shows, which run back to back in most markets, walloped *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* last season, replacing it as the top-rated prime time drama in syndication. This is the first time in ten years that a *Star Trek* series has been unseated as top weekly drama. Stars Kevin Sorbo and Lucy Lawless have been signed to long-term contracts for the new Universal franchises. Also returning to syndication are *The Adventures of Sinbad*, *The New Adventures of Robin Hood*, and *Highlander*. ■

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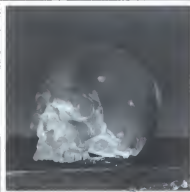


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SILVER APPLES

Continued from page 73

brother. Help me to feel certain that what I have done is right. The apple you have taken cost Fareel her life."

Nedal hesitated. She looked at the avenue of the stone ones, at the marks their claws had made there. "Half an hour," she said. "No more."

"Do you not love me, Nedal?"

Nedal smiled sadly. "I love you, Jemileh. But how can I stay when my brother is dying?"

They sat together where once Nedal had slept, that first day, in the bower of roses and jasmine. Nedal's hand was stiff when Jemileh took it in hers; her lips were warm, but the flesh was resisting now, the sweetness all had fled. "I know your thoughts are with your brother," Jemileh said. "I ask but a little of them, for a little while."

Then Nedal kissed her more warmly, and did not resist the meeting of their tongues. Nor did she resist when Jemileh placed her hand upon her breast, but her hand was limp.

Jemileh drew back, only just a little, and saw upon Nedal's sweet features such a look that she thought she must be dreaming. It was as if Nedal were a wealthy man and Jemileh a beggar accosting her, reeking with the rot.

Then the look was gone and Nedal was herself again, and her eyes were filled with love and sorrow. Almost, Jemileh might have convinced herself that she had imagined that look. Almost.

For in that single moment her world had changed.

"There is one last thing that I would ask of you," she said. "Take my comb and comb my hair."

And Nedal did as she was asked, although her hands trembled and were ungentle.

Jemileh took the comb from her, and for the second time in all her memory, held it in her hands. How long had it been, how many years, since she had last seen its butterfly shape, its wings of gold, studded with rubies and pearls? "This comb," she said. "I would like you to take it. In remembrance of me."

Another look fled across Nedal's features then, a look of greed, gone as quickly as a scudding cloud. Yet Jemileh knew she had been right. Nedal's love had been a lie. Perhaps even the dying brother had been a lie.

"I shouldn't..." Nedal said, hesitating, but now Jemileh saw this for the dissembling it was.

"You must take it," Jemileh said. "If you love me."

"Then I will take it," Nedal said, stroking it with her fingers, as she had stroked it that first night of lovemaking. She kissed Jemileh, a brief kiss, then went to drop the comb into her pouch.

"No," Jemileh said. "Wear it in your hair." Nedal placed the comb among her black tresses—and fell fainting amid the roses.

Jemileh felt a dizziness, an unsteadiness, a kind of lightness, as if a great weight had been lifted from her.

Then it was gone.

JEMILEH SAT ASTRIDE NEDAL'S HORSE. SHE had added an extra dress, and an extra waterskin, no more. On her body she wore robes she had taken from nedal, the robes that would protect her from the dessert sun. In a puch at her waist the silver apple was heavy and smooth.

She was free yet she was filled with sorrow.

She pulled dup her horse outside the garden wall.

"Can you hear me, Nedal?" she cried.

A moan answered her.

"The comb you took from me," she said.

"Was the comb of my bondage. I could not take it from myself. No man could take it from me. No guardian could take it. Only a mortal woman, free and uncumbered. But I would not have had you take it, Nedal, if you had been true with me. I have worn bondage forever, for love of you."

Now there was only silence. She brought her horse closer. "You have what you wanted, Nedal," she said. "Eternal youth. And you are irresistible to men now, much good may it do you. You will never know love. You will never know travel more than three leagues from this place; the comb will not permit that. There will be another will be another guardian to share your exile soon enough, one always comes. Until that time your teachers, your companions, will be the stone ones that line the avenue. From them you may learn all you need to know. Nedal, you are the guardian now."

She touched the reins, then hesitated. She could not leave, not yet. To leave without some word, some sign from Nedal, would be to suffer this sorrow she felt forever. "If you truly have a brother, Nedal, tell me where he is. I will bring him the apple and save his life."

From the garden came the voice of Nedal, filled with bitterness and rancor. And the bitterness was as a sweet balm to the raw pain inside Jemileh, and the rancor was as a key in a prison door, freeing her. "I have no brother," said the voice of Nedal. "My name is not Nedal And since I am the guardian now, I will loose the stone monsters on you and have them pound you into dust."

"They will not harm me." Jemileh turned the horse's head to the west, where the mountains hid the green forest she remembered, and the city of her birth. She would not linger there, in the city where time had claimed all that she loved. She would find a ship instead and sail across the sea to the place where blue skinned savages ride horned fish between islands of green, and jewelled Carchemish lies smiling beneath a southern sun. ♦

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EDITORIAL

Continued from page 7

But she'd smell it on him and say something. Her word alone could make his stomachache last a full month.

When he took his third sip, she was there, sitting on a stool next to him as if it were a throne. Her hair was gold today and piled in a high crown, her lips rosan-berry red.

"New in town, sailor?" she asked lightly. "What's a nice barbarian like you doing in a place like this?" The fun waved madly.

He knew she didn't expect an answer. Not from a barbarian.

"Give us a kiss."

He did what was expected, on the cheek. But her cheek was rough, the beard already beginning to show through the rouge. It surprised him. She never used to be so careless.

"By the Green, Mab!" he said, incautiously. "I thought you could do a better job than that."

She smiled sadly at him. "The grid is going, Grax. The Magic is failing. An old queen just doesn't have the power to fool anymore."

He put down his cup and held her hands. "It doesn't matter," he said and meant it. "It doesn't matter to me."

Although of course it does matter. The voice, that is. For how the audience is addressed is how the audience reacts, pulled into the story by the story's voice, even before the tale itself takes hold. Author and reader together, because reading is a textually transmitted disease. And we've all got it bad who are readers of this magazine. ♦

FOLKROOTS

Continued from page 27

these lovely faeries home. And then this cottage will finally quiet down and I'll have some peace....

(Further reading, nonfiction: *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature*, *The Vanishing People*, *British Folktales*, and *The Encyclopedia of Fairies* by Katharine Briggs; *The Erotic World of Faery* by Maureen Duffy; *Fairy Mythology* by Thomas Keightley; *Fairy Fairy Origins* by Lewis Spence; *British Faith in Celtic Countries* by Evan Wentz; *Ancient Scottish Tales* by Peter Buchan; *The Middle Kingdom* by Dermot MacManus; *British Goblins* by Wirt Sikes; *Fairies at Work and Play* by Geoffrey Hodson. Recommended fiction: *Little, Big* by John Crowley; *Possession* by A.S. Byatt; *The King of Elfland's Daughter* by Lord Dunsany; *Kingsdoms of Elfin* by Sylvia Townsend Warner; *The Door in the Hedge* by Robin McKinley; *Thomas the Rhymer* by Ellen Kushner; *The Perilous Gard* by Elizabeth Marie Pope; *The Wild Wood* by Charles de Lint, and *Something Rich and Strange* by Patricia A. McKillip (both of which include art by Brian Froud); *The Flight of Michael McBride* by Midori Snyder; *War for the Oaks* by Emma Bull; and *The Faery Flag* by Jane Yolen.) ♦

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BOOKS

Continued from page 18

the thing with no specific aim in mind can be particularly dangerous. I was doing it the other day (it's hard to keep your hands off it, to be frank — of course I can take it or leave it alone) and came across an entry labeled POLDER. Never having heard of a polder I fell right into the trap and learned it was a Dutch word for a tract of low-lying land recovered from the sea by building dykes against the water. "Polder," therefore, was a handy word to describe magical lands surrounded by barriers as Oz is by the Deadly Desert and Shangri La is by towering Himalayan peaks. You'll notice I use the present tense for both these places, indicating I believe they still exist. I'm proud to say I do. The only polder in fantasy that is actually Dutch, so far as the encyclopedia knows, is *The Green Face* by Gustav MEYRINK (you can look up capitalized words and names, especially the ones with arrows pointing to them, but I managed to fight off the urge to turn to MEYRINK) whose protagonist leaves Amsterdam after World War I to shelter in the said polder and from it watches an apocalyptic wind scour the rest of the world. Pretty scary, huh? It turned out polders had PORTALS. You think I was able to resist PORTALS? Think again. Turns out portals can take all kinds of interesting forms I hadn't really thought about, such as a CROSSHATCH, which mingles worlds or a THRESHOLD, which demarcates them. You think I was able to resist either CROSSHATCH or THRESHOLD? Think again.

Very highly recommended.
But watch yourself.

—Gahan Wilson

The Annotated H.P. Lovecraft, edited and with an introduction by S.T. Joshi; Dell, NY; 368 pp.; trade paperback: \$12.95

If you're like me, you may have struggled through the work of H.P. Lovecraft at a young age, entranced by his imagination, but confused by his many historical, scientific, and fictional references. I didn't truly realize Lovecraft's brilliance until I rediscovered him many years later, as an adult. And even then, while I understood more of his references, I was still ignorant of many.

Lovecraft is truly one of the foremost writers of horror fiction. He was a man of brilliant imagination, compelling ideas, and an overarching philosophy that melded to create works of striking originality and power. Lovecraft's stories, emulated by many but

not duplicated by none, have had a strong effect on the development of the fields of horror, fantasy, and science fiction. To say, as a fan of horror and the fantastic, that you have not read H.P. Lovecraft is as serious as saying you have not read Edgar Allan Poe.

This wonderful book allows both new readers and long-time fans to enjoy fully more Lovecraft's works. The stories selected for the collection — "The Rats in the Walls," "The Color out of Space," "The Dunwich Horror," and the short novel *At the Mountains of Madness* — include some of Lovecraft's most fascinating work. The introduction, by Lovecraft scholar S.T. Joshi, gives a perceptive overview of Lovecraft's life, desires, beliefs, and creations. The footnotes to each story explain all those pesky references, adding another level to the stories. For example, Joshi's notes on the various expeditions to

the Antarctic help put Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* in context. The footnotes also reveal some of the connections between Lovecraft's stories. For example, Joshi tells readers where Lovecraft's fictional creation the Necronomicon is first mentioned, which stories refer to "The Elder Ones," and the origins of Miskatonic University. The notes also provide some fascinating new ways of looking at these stories. I loved finding out, for example, that the plot for "The Rats in the Walls," in which a man discovers that beneath the cellar of his ancestral home lies an ancient sub-cellar and beneath that an even more ancient grotto, is coincidentally very similar to a dream experienced by Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. Lovecraft aficionados will find a wealth of information; newcomers to Lovecraft will be grateful for the support through the more reference-heavy sections of the stories.

But let's not overlook the stories themselves. Lovecraft's stories will take you to places you've never before, and give you experiences you will never have again, experiences that will disturb, horrify, and literally haunt you for the rest of your life. *At the Mountains of Madness*, a horror/SF hybrid, is my favorite Lovecraft story of all time, and no matter how many times I read it, I continue to marvel at the suspense, the terror, and the ultimate alienness of the experience Lovecraft creates. He believed firmly that aliens should be alien, not thinly disguised humans. And he believed that a writer must follow his own vision, not write to meet the demands of the marketplace. In following this philosophy, Lovecraft created one of the most compelling and singular bodies of work in the field of fantastic fiction.

—Jeanne Cavelos



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Contributors.

KD. WENTWORTH GOT HER START in 1988 by winning in the Writers of the Future Contest, and has gone on to publish over thirty stories in such markets as *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Alfred Hitchcock's*, and *Return to the Twilight Zone*, as well as publish three novels with Del Rey, *The Imperium Game*, *Moonspeaker*, and *House of Moons*. In her "spare" time she is a fourth grade teacher/cafe/terria riot control specialist. The idea for "In the Land of the Bears" came out of the research for her last novel, an alternate history Cherokee fantasy. She is at work on yet another novel, her seventh.

A.M. Dellamonica has been, at various points in her life, a theatre technician, rape crisis worker, college newspaper editor, actor, apprentice pink-collar slave trader, alarm monitor, piccolo diva and guerrilla secretary. A resident of Vancouver, B.C., Canada, where she lives with the most wonderful woman in the world, she is a member of the Fangs of God On-line Writers Workshop. Her stories have appeared in *Crank!* and *Tomorrow! Speculative Fiction* and a number of other magazines and anthologies. She is currently at work on a handful of projects, including a novel.

Kate Daniel says that statistics indicate most people will have three careers during their working life. Writing is Kate Daniel's third career, and the one where she plans to remain. She lives in rural Arizona with her husband and assorted cats. They have two grown children. Kate spent three years teaching high school music and English. Her second career began when she learned computer programming and spent several years doing free-lance programming. This led indirectly to her current career, as she was asked to become a sysop (systems operator) on the Genie Computer Network. On Genie, she was encouraged to write, leading to the publication of her first novel in April of 1992. She has since had six novels published by HarperCollins, all Young Adult mystery-thrillers. In addition, she has had a number of stories published in various fantasy/sci fi anthologies. The most recent were "The Bandido of Pozosoco" in *Highwaymen, Robbers and Rogues* and "The Voice of a God" for *Sorcery*. Current projects include an adult science fiction mystery project and a novel combining a ghost story with a multi-generational mystery. Kate is now in charge of the Online Writers' Workshop, both on Genie's SFRT4 where her own career began, and the new Dueling Modems server.

Beverly Suarez-Beard is a Clarion West graduate and a first-place winner in the Writers of the Future contest. Her stories have appeared in *Writers of the Future*, Vol. XI, *Century*, *Realms of Fantasy*, and *School Magazine*.

Currently she is working on a novel set in the world of her short story "Rosita's Baby" (published in the *Writers of the Future* anthology). When she is not writing or tutoring or taking care of her one-year old son, she is learning to speak Spanish and trying to transform the jungle of weeds in her Florida backyard into a garden.



Susan J. Kroupa



A. M. Dellamonica

SUSAN J. KROUPA HAS A DEGREE IN music theory and has worked as a music reviewer, arts feature writer, and a freelance journalist. Her story "Scapegoat," published in the October 1996 issue of *ROF* was an honorable mention in the *Datlow/Windling Yarn's Best*, and is currently on the preliminary Nebula ballot. Susan has sold a story to the anthology *Dimensions of Madness*. She was a first place winner in last year's Deep South Writing Conference Competition, and in the 1993 *Writers of the Future* contest. She also won an award in the 1995 Frank Waters Writers of the Southwest competition. For story excerpts and more information, visit her web page at <http://www.sff.net/people/s.kroupa/>. Susan is currently finishing a historical/fantasy novel set in Hopi culture. She loves horses, Nubian goats, and her new puppy, Tiyo.

Doug Andersen resides in Simsbury, Connecticut. He has a Masters in Painting from San Jose State University. Doug has worked in the Aerospace Industry, where he did conceptual renderings of satellite systems and technical illustration for space ship design. He currently teaches drawing and illustration at the University of Hartford. He is inspired by such Golden Age illustrators as Arthur Rackham. Doug likes a deadline to keep him focused on his work and has been known to play a mean blues harmonica around the house.

Steve Adler grew up in Peekskill, New York. He attended the Rhode Island School of Design from 1980 to 1983, and spent his final year abroad studying art in Rome. Steve has since moved to New York City where he has been an illustrator for over eleven years. Recent clients for his artwork include Microsoft, Time Magazine, United Airlines and Sony Music. ■

Randal Spangler

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